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TRAVELS BY 'UMBRA.'

AND INDEED THE SUNDRY CONTEMPLATION OF MY TRAVELS, IN WHICH MY OFTEN RUMINATION WRAPS ME, IS A MOST HUMOROUS SADNESS."

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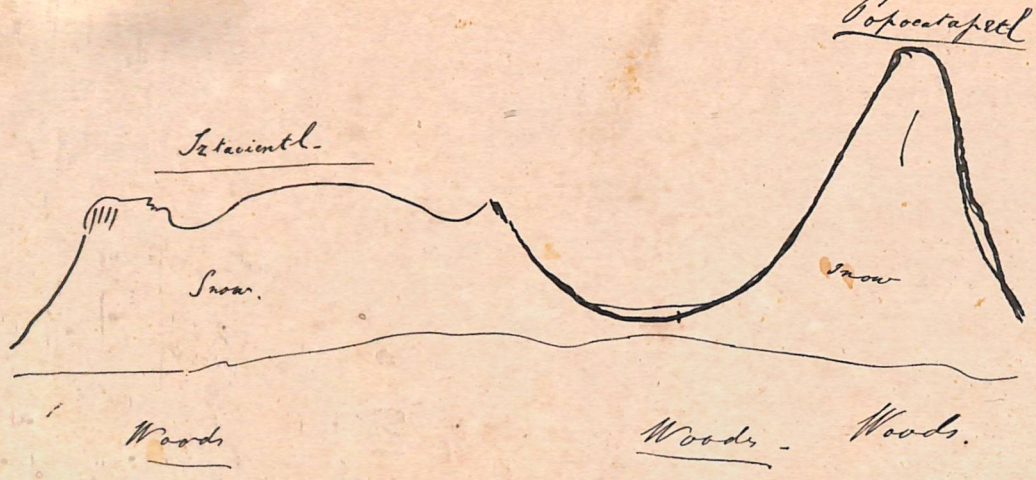

THE MEXICAN MOUNTAIN AS SKETCHED BY M^{R} X.

TRAVELS

BY

'UMBRA'

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EDINBURGH: EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS.

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BOOK FIRST.

BOOK FIRST.

A TOUR TWENTY YEARS AGO.

CHAPTER I.

ONE summer evening, twenty years ago, our party sat on the hummocks, through which crawled a twisting brook. The setting sun was streaming with intense yellow lustre on the grassy plain that stretched far, far away. Snowy hills, one hundred miles distant from one another, made themselves clearly visible through the diaphanous ether. Close to us, and to and fro, paced cattle such as Claude Lorraine or Poussin might have placed in the foreground of their pictures; but one additional feature was here, which neither Claude nor Poussin ever dreamed of inserting in a landscape. From the ground rose bursts of steam, such as are seen to issue from factories in crowded manufacturing towns; and the cattle, as they occasionally walked through the intervening vapour, loomed large, assuming a strange,

weird, unnatural aspect. Yet was there no house or shieling near, and these jets of steam rose not from any subterranean smithies, or work of inventive man. These were the hot springs of Reykjavik; time, ten o'clock at night; summer in Iceland. We were a party of six, twenty years ago; but through that space my memory reverts, and brings to me all distinct as though it happened but yesterday. Again I breathe the pure fresh air, again I seem to know the tent my home, my plaid as my bed, and my saddle for a pillow. I look at our ponies feeding, and I take hold of the curiously carved wooden ask, brought from a neighbouring farm, brimming full of milk, which, however, I do not myself like; and again I hear the frequent laugh, the merry jest of those comrades. But let me present them:—

First—he who by tacit consent was reckoned the head of our party—was surnamed Archibald M'Diarmid. I believe the addition of Esquire is considered a sort of insult in the Highlands, whence he came, so I omit it. M'Diarmid, like Crichton, did all things well, being a first-rate sportsman, a good draughtsman, was a follower of science, and an author to boot. He possessed qualities of coolness, deliberation, and courage, that would have fitted him to be the leader of a party bound on an expedition far more adventurous than our own. He was,

moreover, a pleasant companion, but lest it should be thought that I am describing a too perfect character, I will admit that he cherished two superstitions: first, he believed in Ossian; secondly, he held it as an article of faith, not to be doubted, that his tent was completely waterproof.

Next to him I will introduce Mr. Darwin, a really celebrated personage. He had written a learned book on Northern Antiquities, in recompense of which a Scandinavian potentate created him a Knight of the second class of the order of the Walrus, the ribbon of which illustrious Order was suspended across his brawny shoulders. Of Herculean height and strength, with his long black beard descending to his waist, he resembled a Viking of old, and such I conceive he at times supposed himself to be. In fact, so deeply was he imbued with the spirit of antiquity, that a continual antagonism between the past and the present, or rather, I should say, between the imaginary and the real, existed in his breast. He was two gentlemen at once. Though a sincerely religious man, still I cannot help suspecting that in his heart of hearts he looked on Christianity as a somewhat *parvenu* creed, and deemed that Thor, Odin, Freya, etc., were the proper objects of worship. In dull fact, he

was an excellent citizen, a householder, paying rates and taxes, an affectionate husband, and the good father of a family; but in the dream, the fancy—"the spirit, Master Shallow"—he was a Berserker, a Norse pirate, ploughing the seas in his dragon-beaked barque, making his trusty falchion ring on the casques of his enemies, slaying, pillaging, burning, ravishing, and thus gratifying a laudable taste for adventure. I fear he preferred the glorious dream to the sober reality. I think he inwardly pined at his own respectability, that he considered himself misplaced in the narrow sphere of duties. But he was a most agreeable comrade, and till the fatal end * * *

Third, was Ragner, Lord Lodbrog, an Irish peer, and then a student at the University. He derived his descent from a chieftain of that name, who had slain a dragon, after encasing himself in impenetrable hairy breeches, and it was still a custom in his family, out of respect to this ancestor, to wear hirsute nether garments. How gay was Lodbrog! the life and soul of our company; his cheerfulness never failed. As he cantered on ahead of all, "*cum spumantis equi foderet calcaribus armos,*" a crimson sash round his waist, the plumage of the wild swan in his cap, and round his shoulders slung a horn, which had erst, to the great

disgust of the Dons, awoke the echoes of Peckwater Quad, he was hailed by us as decidedly the "Skarzmadur" or Dandy of the party.

Fourth, was Mr. X., a Member of Parliament, who had come out late in the session. I am not aware that he ever enlightened the Senate by his eloquence. He was rather a silent, reserved person, and his chief talent seemed to consist in smoking tobacco. However, to do him justice, he was always good-tempered, lent a willing hand at the packing in the morning, and never bored any of us by quoting blue-books, which is much to his credit. When he did speak, it was generally to make some citation from the classics or Shakspeare, which was tedious, but happily brief.

Fifth, was Mr. Digwell, a relative of Mr. Darwin, Fellow of a College at Cambridge, and unfortunately for him smitten with a taste for Geology, which had impelled him to come to Iceland. He was a tall, thin man, and always carried a hammer to aid him in his favourite pursuit. He also brought an ancient military saddle, which an ancestor of his had used in the Duke of Marlborough's campaigns. On an Iceland pony it seemed somewhat misplaced. Besides his zeal for science, Digwell was passionately fond of poetry, and for hours together would repeat verses, embodying the

mysterious longings of the soul. Unluckily Nature had endowed him with another craving, entirely opposed to romance; namely, a most inordinate appetite. He left his hall at Cambridge, where the table groaned beneath ample joints, he left the pleasant Combination Room and its delicacies, to come to the barren regions where even bread is an unknown luxury; for no grain will ripen in Iceland. Never was there a more signal refutation of the fallacy of that impostor, Goldsmith's Hermit, that "man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long," for Digwell wanted a great deal, and wanted it a long time without getting it. All that he must have suffered to the end can never be known. Poor, poor Digwell!

Sixth, and last, came I, Umbra, the historian of this journey. Of myself little can be said. I was called to the Bar, and have no doubt whatever that I should have become Lord Chancellor if I had ever had a brief given me, but I never had—"*c'est le premier pas qui coute.*" I could not invent briefs. In the meanwhile, I had settled down to be a constant attendant at my Club, and bid fair to become what the youngsters call a "Fogey," or an "Institution." My chief diversion had hitherto been to travel in the South, and thither was I again bound, but was checked by two considera-

tions: either I must have proceeded through Switzerland, which I knew by heart, and was sick of meeting gentlemen carrying Alpenstocks engraved with the names of mountains which they had never been up; or else I must have gone up the old Rhine, and my soul loathed the recollection of the steamboat, the two o'clock dinner, the gormandising tourists occupying the whole deck, jumping up occasionally to look at St. Goar and the Lurleyberg; and then, satisfied with such passing glimpses of spots renowned in legend and in song, resuming their meal. While in this state of indecision, my friend M'Diarmid met me at the Club, and said, "Come with us to Iceland." This was new, this was original, unexplored ground, so I came.

And this was our first day in Iceland, and we had gone to bathe in the hot springs some three miles from the town, and after our bath were reposing on the grass.

"Behold," said Darwin, pointing to the south-west, "the giant Snaefell, the snowy hill, so named by Nadd-Oddur, the first discoverer of Iceland. He came and departed. Gardar was the second who came; but he made no settlement, and the existence of the isle was doubted by another generation. Then Floki sailed in his galley from Faroë, and took with him three ravens, which he let loose at different times in his voyage; the

two first winged back their way to Faroë, but the third flew north, and the mariners, taking the instinct of the bird for their guide, pursued their course and made the land. It was Floki who gave the isle its present name, but Ingolf was the first colonist. He consulted the Oracle, and was told that Iceland was reserved for him and his posterity. Then embarked he with his daughter Helga, and his son-in-law Leifus, surnamed Hiorleif, the Knight of the Sword, which he stole in Ireland and killed the owner; and they placed all their booty on board, and came and remained. This was in the year when Edmund the Martyr, the Saxon king of England, was slain and interred at Bury. But it is getting late, so let us return to Reykjavik."

Differing as we did in years and other respects, it was wonderful what a harmonious party we proved. We never quarrelled, we never sulked, nor do I remember one passing cloud till the sad, sad catastrophe. Of us it might be said, in the words of the poet,

"We were a gallant company;"

and the succeeding verses were literally true of us—

"We forded the river, we clomb the high hill,
Never a day our steeds stood still."

I have not made up my mind whether I shall print this or not, but if I do, if I catch a reader, then, O

Reader, whom I scorn to flatter by the claptrap compliments of gentle or courteous; no, I rather choose to address thee as miserable and unhappy being; whether thou beest some weatherbound traveller at a country inn, and tired of watching the raindrops trickle down the window panes, takest up this as a last resource, or whether thou beest some disappointed damsel compelled to stay alone at home because it is your sister's turn to go out, and Lady Wayward Savage would not ask two to her ball. Unknown and mysterious creature, Reader, I say—know this, be well assured of one thing—that truth, sacred truth, guides my pen, and all that is here related is matter-of-fact history. Why was Othello plunged into horrible misfortune? I have my own theory on the subject. It was because he did not adhere to the truth. It was well for him to discourse to Desdemona of cannibals and anthropophagi, if she cared to hear of such people; but when he gravely assured that fair, unsuspecting creature that he had seen men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders, by this wilful departure from truth, by this monstrous fabrication, he no doubt incurred the penalties of avenging Nemesis. Conceive such a man dining out in Venice and telling these travellers' stories over his wine! Moreover, I remember that Darwin

once said, that to tell a Saga wrong was reckoned a great offence against public morality! Therefore, O Reader, place implicit faith in my narrative.

O Critic, before whom unwhipped authors tremble, I care not for thee. Why should Umbra care? Thou canst not lash a shade; as well mightst thou carve the impalpable and viewless air with thy trenchant paper-knife. I mock myself of thee, as our ally Griolet said he mocked himself of Thomsen the Icelander.

Boot and saddle!—to horse!—to horse! Let us be off! Sound thy horn, Ragner! sound it loud and blaring through the street of Reykjavik! After some delay, our ponies are bought, paid for, and shod. The luggage is at last packed, the guides are mounted, and the cavalcade is ready to start. Forwards!—march! Sound thy horn, Ragner! sound it yet again! The echo falls through all the intervening time not unpleasantly on my ear.

CHAPTER II.

"HALT!" cried Darwin, who already knew the ground; and we halted.

Sheer below us lay Thingvalla.

I was not astonished—not at all—though perhaps the most remarkable spot in the world was beneath my feet; but I had been so sedulously instructed that I was to be surprised, that the foretold sensation could not take effect; a surprise expected cannot be a surprise.

Since our time, Lord Dufferin visited the place, and has written a good account of it in his amusing book, *Letters from High Latitudes.* As he observes, the whole district has fallen—sunk down; the space between the two opposite eminences being some five miles wide.

We rode down a steep track between the main wall of lava and a mighty fragment rent from its side. I was puzzled to think of what it reminded me, till the solution came. Take a honeycomb, and break off a large slice, which falls to one side, but still cleaves at bottom to the main comb, magnify it through an intellectual

microscope, and it may give some idea of the broken, porous, lava cliffs of Thingvalla.

The Gia, or space between the main cliff and the broken off portion, is beautifully clothed with turf. It extends two miles in length. A river—the Öxará—which hurtles over the brow of the hill at one extremity, flows through a portion of the Gia, bubbling over gigantic slabs of lava, till at the Wicked Woman's Pool it quits the narrow Gia, and flows tranquilly through an open plain to Thingvalla Lake. We ford the river, and in the Churchyard pitch our tent.

After refreshing ourselves with a bathe, we proceeded, under the guidance of Darwin, to the Parliament Hill—verily a singular place for a Legislature to meet: a long narrow peninsula of lava surrounded by water, which on one side flows slowly through a deep fissure, some hundred feet in depth and twenty in breadth. I am particular about the latter, as Darwin related to us an anecdote of one Member of Parliament having been here attacked by armed men—"Clearly a gross breach of privilege!" Mr. X. observed—and of his having in desperation cleared the chasm: a feat which, though I felt no disposition to emulate, did not seem at all incredible. It seemed to me pleasanter to look down quietly on the calm, silent waters below. The ravine

reminded me of the Baths of Pfeffers, but far deeper; and the water filtered through the lava intensely clear, green in colour, and in brilliancy of that colour rivalling the Grotta Azzurra of Capri's purple hue.

Darwin was here in his glory. He knew the spot itself, he knew all the traditions connected with it, he knew the speeches that had been made, the debates, the divisions: he knew everything; and he showed us with complacency the Logberg, *i.e.*, the Hill of Laws, and where the Commons held their booths adjacent.

"Here," said he, "here sat that ancient Iceland Parliament which flourished in full vitality while we in Britain were still in thraldom. Here assembled those mighty Norse chieftains, who, scorning to submit to the yoke of Harold Harfager, fled hither and founded a free commonwealth. From them it is that we derive our most precious blessing of Self-Government; and to think that this goodly fabric has been overthrown, that the very sight of their former glory is almost forgotten, that the rude peasant eyes it with indifference, and it is we—we alone—strangers, who approach the hallowed spot with any reverence."

I thought this a favourable opportunity of bringing out one of the few quotations I am up in, so I commenced:

"To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy---;" but here M'Diarmid, who from the old feud hated Dr. Johnson, gave me a violent nudge, and I held my tongue.

Mr. X. then inquired whether the Iceland Parliament had any Whips, and receiving no answer from Darwin, except a withering glance of scorn, he shook his head and said it was all very well (meaning, I suppose, the reverse), but that no Parliament could get on without a Whip, and he was not at all surprised that in such case the Iceland one turned out a failure.

"And see below," resumed Darwin; "see that little sandy isle in the river. Did two noble chiefs unhappily quarrel, there they met in duel, while their friends and retainers stood on either bank as spectators. There they decided the quarrel with their good broadswords, till one was hailed as conqueror, and the soul of the other flitted to the halls of Odin, happy even in his fall; for him met the Warrior Maids, him they welcomed to Valhalla, for him poured they the sparkling mead; at least such was the ignorant superstition of these poor men," concluded Darwin, suddenly pulling up, and remembering he was a nineteenth century man.

"And now," said he, "let us descend the hill, and go to the Pool of the Wicked Women;" which we did, and very fair is the pool to look at: the river dashing joyously into the deep circle, and re-issuing through a portal of huge rock, through which the distant country and the snowy shield of Skjaldbreid (the broad shield) were visible, as it were, framed like the drop-scene at a theatre. A fair and joyous spot, not fit for the murder of women! sentenced for witchcraft forsooth! It was melancholy to think many a poor creature, condemned on false accusation, had here met her doom, and taken the last look of the sapphire sky, spread like a curtain over our heads. We asked Darwin if there was a pool for wicked men, but he was not aware of any such, and when we inquired if this was fair play for the other sex, and how he reconciled such one-handed justice with the boasted chivalry of the Norse race, he could only reply that women were sometimes very provoking!

We spent another day at Thingvalla, and ere I quit it, let me say I feel how inadequate is my pen to do justice to the theme. The caverned tracts of lava, clothed with moss and lichen—a garment many generations old; the rock-bound valley, the toppling crags, the falling river, the shadowy ravines, where the gaudy

splendour of the summer day is mellowed into dim twilight, the pools of pellucid water, the emerald meadow, the wide expanse of lake beyond, with volcanic isle, the distant mountains mantled in eternal snow: when I look back to them all, they seem rather the fantastic image of a dream than a reminiscence of my actual life.

CHAPTER III.

THIS is the mysterious Tintron, the puzzle of geologists, the Lava Spout, the only one known to exist in the world, like unto the blackened stump of a tree, ten feet or so in height, through which the fluid flame is supposed to have once soared in air, as water from the hose of a fire-engine. We have left Thingvalla, we have ascended the second Gia, and for leagues around all is lava. Above rise red mountains of calcined earth, and the snows of Skjaldbreid behind. Now we come to grassy plains, and gallop at the top of our speed, leaving sulphur springs to the right, and in view of distant Hecla. Half-way we mount our reserve horses, and again proceed through steep ruts, where it requires care to preserve the legs from being twisted off the body—a painful dismemberment; and now we halt at the brink of a blue river. One by one the sure-footed ponies proceed to ford the stream, in whose centre gapes a huge crack in its lava bed, and adown

this the water rushes in bright cascade. Over this rent, planks have been fixed, and on this bridge, which is not across, but in the river, our cavalcade safely treads. We gain an open plain, and are told that behind the hills opposite, the Geysers wait us; one more gallop, one more river to ford, and we arrive.

The Geysers is, I believe, the generic name applied to all the hot springs in this district; but we used the word Geyser for the great fount exclusively, the basin of which, encased in a deposit of its own silica, extrudes like a large boil from the plain. The silica, at first white like stalactite, but soon turning to a dirty gray, assumes divers patterns of quaint design, not unlike frost-work.

Two hundred yards back is the Strokr, always in a state of violent excitement and indignation, seething, hissing, sputtering. Spitfire would be a decided misnomer; but the creature is never an instant quiet. Higher up is the Kitchen, so called by us because we boiled our meat therein, and all around are innumerable little hot springs bubbling from the clay, some so small, an inch in height, no more,—like tiny models of the great Geyser,—toys made to amuse a Lilliputian monarch.

The first thing we did was to pitch our tent close to the great Geyser, that we might have a full, uninter-

rupted view of the Waterworks, whenever they might play; but a long-headed member of the party observing that, in case of a shift of wind, we should infallibly be scalded to death, a change of position was immediately made, and then we proceeded to bully the Strokr, by collecting and throwing in a quantity of turf, with the view of making his dyspeptic stomach disgorge the same.

No one has ventured to take this liberty with the majestic Geyser. Independent of the considerable quantity it would take, such an experiment could only be made after its eruption, when the basin becomes empty, and the water sinks low in the funnel. The Strokr has no basin, and can at all times be insulted; haply not with impunity, for after we had pitched in the turf, and were lounging carelessly about the brink, suddenly the spiteful little fellow jumped high in air—some thirty feet, I should say—horribly dirty from his dose of turf, a russet brown, in shape and colour like a frost-scorched cypress; up jumped, I say, the Strokr, eager to take revenge. We turned and fled; a drop or two of scalding water caught M'Diarmid in his flight. Thrice did the little Strokr lift himself up to avenge the insult offered him, but he found no other victim.

It is midnight; before seeking my pillow—that is to

say my saddle—I look out from the tent: it is brilliant moonlight. I rub my eyes with astonishment to assure myself that I am not dreaming. What strange form is yon—dancing, capering, performing grotesque gambols in the rays of the pale planet? Is it a Troll, a gnome, or goblin? or is it one of that hidden antique race, who, the Icelanders maintain, exist, adorned with tails, in the desert interior of the country, and who sally forth as outlaws, and rob all the sheep that cannot otherwise be accounted for? No, no, it is none of these; it is the Lord of the Swiss Valley, the master of Bella Tola. Hail, oh companion of our voyage! Though Nature has bereft thee of speech and hearing, has she not bestowed on thee a quick intelligence which education has sedulously improved? Shalt thou not be ever welcomed to our tent and humble meal? Very grateful were you for our small attentions. Not Mr. Micawber himself ever rushed into more copious correspondence.

And at night we occasionally heard thump, thump, and the ground shook beneath us as an earthquake, and we would rush out, expecting to see the Geyser play, and he would not. And all next day we waited, and occasionally the same signals were repeated, and slowly would his waters upheave, like an infant sea, and again subside.

And again next night would we hear thump, thump, and feel the earth shake beneath us, and we would rush out from the tent, to return miserably cold and disappointed. At last Darwin profanely called the Geyser an old brute!

Whether it was that the noble Geyser was susceptible of this insult, and determined to show himself off to advantage, I know not; but certain it was that between nine and ten next morning, after one of his incipient eruptions, instead of subsiding as before, the solid column of water rose in majesty, while a cloud of steam, like an enormous white banner, floated to leeward. Thrice did the silver pillar fall, and again arise glorious, leaving an impression never to be effaced from our minds. The last time he sunk as though utterly exhausted, and we could enter the basin and peep down the half-empty funnel, while the hot water discharged was coursing down in a hundred little rivulets to the cold river below.

The time which the eruption took could not exceed ten minutes; what was its height we made various conjectures, but did not accurately ascertain. As the column rose and fell, the verses of Schiller recurred to me. I think it smacks of pedantry to quote them, and therefore I quote them: –

"Im Hexameter steigt des Springquell's flüssige Säule
Im Pentameter drauf fällt sie melodisch herab."

Here are statistics :—

Breadth of the lip of the Geyser funnel, 20 feet diameter. There is a slight slope inward from the lip for a little way, so that the diameter of the actual funnel is under 20 feet; the circumference of the fountain of water at the stem of the column would be close on 60 feet; of course, it expands as it rises.

The depth of the Geyser funnel, 75 feet.

Heat of water at the bottom (first experiment), 249 degrees.

Heat of water at 37½ feet, 253 degrees.

Heat of water at the bottom (second experiment), 270 degrees.

The diameter of the basin, 57 feet in its broadest part. It is nearly, but not quite, a complete circle; to walk round it took exactly 60 paces.

Diameter of the Strokr, 8 feet.

Depth of Strokr funnel, 36 feet.

The day was so intensely hot that we were compelled to put up plaids and blankets as awnings. In the afternoon the wind changed, and a cold current of air set in. At night ice lay on the ground. These sudden changes of temperature are trying to some people.

In the afternoon, I am sorry to say, we again bullied the poor Strokr.

Mr. X., who turned out to be an old traveller, said it was always better to carry clean linen than dirty, and that the Geyser being now our temporary home, he did not think he should be contravening the French proverb by making it his wash-tub; so he set to work, and having washed all his things, and hung them out to dry, retired into the tent, where Darwin sought him out with a carefully bound volume in his hand, which he had extracted from the bottom of his box.

"My dear X.," said Darwin, "you shall read my translation of the Saga. In it you will find, for the first time adequately rendered into English, the song of the Valkyries, that is, the Corse Choosers, or, as some term them, the Fatal Sisters. Ah! as Sir Philip Sidney said of the ballad of Chevy Chase, it moves the heart like the sound of a trumpet!" And Darwin, with great animation, declaimed several verses, in a to me unknown tongue--

"Vindum, vindum,
Vef Darraudur," etc. etc.

"Gray, indeed, has attempted to translate it. I am

a stranger to vanity, but this I will say, that my version is as superior to that of Gray as—as—as—"

"As you are to —," said I, prompted by a reminiscence out of Sir Jonah Barrington.

"Exactly; that is just it! Thank you, Umbra! Let us go for a stroll."

We climbed up the burnt red hill to the left of the Geyser, over ash and crumbling scoria, M'Diarmid and Digwell collecting round stones, which they called volcanic bombs: the theory being that they are sent up during an eruption, and explode like shells in the air; they are about the size and weight of grape-shot. At the top of the hill was a fine panorama. Southward, Hecla and the sea, to which more than one river runs through grassy plains, on whose green surface the spot just below our feet, round the Geysers, seemed what it really is, a hot burn—or rather a scald or blister—on the face of Nature. To the North extended countless mountains, the cold brilliancy of whose glaciers glistened in the pale glare of the evening sky.

As we returned, Darwin observed, "I really envy X.! It is a rare privilege for any man to see the Geysers play, and to read for the first time the Njal Saga, on one and the same day." Approaching the tent, we hallooed to Mr. X., but no answer came. "He

is too deep in it to attend to us," said Darwin; but when we got close up we found him fast asleep, with the book open before him.

"The brute! the insensate brute!" cried the enraged author. "He has fallen asleep over the most interesting chapter in the whole Saga! Perhaps he is dreaming now that he is back in his stupid House. To think that a fellow like that should legislate for me and mine! He should die for this; for a less offence Ella shut up Ragner in a dungeon with snakes; he should die. But no," continued he, smiting his forehead, "I cannot slay him asleep; for what says the Volsung tale? Guttorm slew Sigurd sleeping, and confusion came of it; evil bred evil; crime engendered crime!—I cannot do it!"

In the meanwhile, Mr. X., unconscious of the terrible danger he was in, slept calmly, peacefully. At the end of another hour he woke, and quietly returned Darwin his book, thanking him, and saying he had been much interested. Darwin, who had now regained his composure, made no reply; but I thought I heard him hiss through his clenched teeth the word "Traitor!" and though not sure, I am willing to suppose he had only been grimly jesting when he talked of killing the somnolent offender.

Meanwhile, our friend Bella Tola was resolved to make a return of hospitality, and he wrote us formal invitations to come to tea. The whole of the day he spent in cutting white paper into elaborate patterns, destined, he said, to represent Sèvres china. At the appointed hour we went to his tent, and found all his store set forth in splendour. "*Le jambon qu'une bonne dame avait glissé dans ma main en partant;*" the bottle of cogniac presented to him by another lady; the smoked salmon by a third; the confectionary by a fourth; in fact, the whole female population of Reykjavik seemed to have adopted the adventurous Knight-Errant! He could not speak to them, but then he wrote *billets-doux.*

We did justice to his fare, with the exception of the cogniac, which we bade him keep in case of illness. Indeed, we were teetotallers throughout our journey, not from virtue, but from difficulty of transport.

It was the 2d day of August 18—, our dear Ragner's birthday. When this transpired, we all drank his health, not in wine, but in tea made from the Geyser's boiling spring. I am bound to say the speeches were uncommon flat and insipid, in consequence perhaps.

"Oh, thou that wearest hairy garments!" said Darwin, "mayst thou prove worthy of thy great ancestor! May it be a happy omen that the Geyser leapt in air to

celebrate your natal day! May you never neglect favourable opportunities of cultivating your talents like some!" continued Darwin, darting a fierce look at the unconscious X., who had slumbered over the Saga. "But my feelings overcome me. Lodbrog, your health."

"*Ceade' millia fealth*,"—or something like it—said M'Diarmid, in Gaelic.

"*Macte nova virtute*—confound it!—how does it go on? Ragner, your good health," said Mr. X.

Lord Lodbrog returned thanks suitably; and when our entertainer was made aware what was going on, he was much excited, and dashed into a series of letters, inviting us all to come and see him at Bella Tola.

Next morning we parted, going in different directions. Our friend had a wonderfully smart album, to which he made us all contribute. M'Diarmid and Lord Lodbrog painted for him two spirited sketches of the place, and of the phenomenon which we had together witnessed. Mr. Darwin wrote such an affecting homily, that it brought tears to the eyes of the sensitive Swiss. Mr. X., after smoking many pipes, and severe cudgelling of his brains, produced some Latin Sapphics, of which he afterwards gave me a copy. I don't know much about these things myself, but I strongly suspect there is more than one false quantity:—

"Liquit antiquam patriam, domumque
Alpium celsis nivibus propinquam,
Vallis Autumni radiis refulget
Purpurea uvis.

"Pervagatur nunc scopulos rigentes
Ultimæ Thules, cineres, arenam—
Arbor inclementi hiemum sub aurâ
Nulla virescit.

"Montium hic circum lacerabat olim
Viscera, erumpens subito tonitru,
Flammeus torrens ; superabat astra
Arduus Ignis!

"Scilicet magnam cumulans ruinam !
Illius passus ubicunque cernis,
Fontium crebrê calidi vapores
Æthera mulcent.

"Tutus invisis redeat periclis
In suas ædes Griolet viator,
Rideant illi redeunti amœnê
Sponsa, Laresque."

Thus translated by Digwell, who did it, so to say, in the smacking of a whip :—

"He left his native land afar to roam,
The ancient country crowned with Alpine snows,
Low in the sheltered valley lies his home,
Where rich the Autumn's purple vintage glows.

"Now Iceland's barren regions he explores,
'Mid rocks, and lava, ash, and desert sand,
So keen the wintry tempest sweeps the shores,
No tree its leafy honours may expand.

"And all beside him mountains drear ascend,
Their flanks e'en yet beseam'd with crimson scars,
Whose womb of yore th' imprisoned fire did rend,
When the smoke column did obscure the stars.

"Wide ruin spread the element around,
His havoc leagues on leagues may you descry,
And still the smould'ring flame lurks underground,
And tosses boiling fountains to the sky.

"May here our Griolet no danger meet,
And when he shall recross the foaming main,
May him his wife and children fondly greet,
And welcome home the traveller again."

When it came to my turn I knew not what to write. At last, prompted by the recollection of the evening banquet, I scribbled some doggrel lines, of which I only remember the following:—

"Comme Bayard, héros sans peur et sans reproche
Il parcourût Islande, un jambon dans sa poche,
Il voyageait tout seul, et sans autre appui—
Les femmes l'adoraient—les hommes étaient jaloux de lui."

When these met the eye of our friend he was in some doubt how to take them. They hardly came up to that

standard of respect which he assumed as due to himself. I am not sure that he did not meditate for a while my destruction by duello. At last he wrote me word that he forgave me. "*Mais*," he added, "*je suis trop indulgent ; beaucoup trop indulgent !*"

What the gifted Digwell wrote I know not; alas, how precious would it now be !

CHAPTER IV.

We left the Geysers, intending to follow a road marked in the map at the back of Skjaldbreid, but for some reason the guide whom we engaged preferred to take us between Skjaldbreid and another hill—Trolhals, I believe—and though there was no track, and the march was excessively fatiguing, it revealed to us perhaps the most remarkable scene of desolation that the mind of man can conceive. After leaving the Geysers, scrambling over some rough hills, and riding some miles north-west, we came to a black gorge, not unlike a gigantic coal-scuttle—an undignified but strictly true comparison. At the foot of this, the clump of ponies is checked; then deploying in single file, the cavalcade winds up the steep face of the cliff by frequent zig-zags, a very picturesque sight to those who watched it from below. Some one profanely compared it to horses mounting the platform at Astley's, an ignoble comparison, felt to be so true as to be almost

painful. Arrived at the summit, we found ourselves on a table-land that extended some leagues between snow-crowned Skjaldbreid on the right, and the other mountain on the left. What a fearful valley! Boulders of lava, domes of lava, walls of lava, pinnacles of lava! We crossed the ridges, which ensued in endless succession, like the swell of the mid-Atlantic Ocean, waves of what had once been fluid fire, the long rolling billows of an infernal surge, of a tempest whose wild commotion had been fixed by cohesion into everlasting shapes of bristling awe. On all sides horror! horror! horror! The thought winged its way to the time when it was a tossing liquid sea, glaring with baleful light, and exhaling dreadful fumes. Such a vision must have been present to the mind of Milton, when he depicted Satan prostrate after his fall:—

"The dismal situation waste and wild,
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed—yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow."

No living object was visible during the whole day's journey. The descent from the lofty valley, still over lava, was yet more toilsome, but very picturesque. To

the left we saw the distant lake of Thingvalla, and immediately below us lay a plain, or what from that height seemed a plain, studded with volcanic craters, and girdled with a range of higher snowy hills. I remember Mr. X. took his pipe from his mouth, and pointing with his hand, exclaimed the single word "Mexico!" from which ejaculation I discovered that he had travelled in that country, and saw a resemblance in the scene before us to the celebrated valley from which Hernan Cortes took his title. It was not till we had rode forty miles that we came to any water for the horses, of which they were greatly in need. Later in the evening we came to a small lake or pond, called Brunnar, where we pitched our tent, and dispersed to collect dry roots of the dwarf birch, as fuel to light our fire and cook our meal.

All next day we rode north, and in the afternoon descended into the Reykholtsdalr, which was nearly parallel to the adjacent vale of the Hvita. Puffs of white smoke in the distance gave notice of the hot springs of Reykholt, and when we arrived at that place we found the whole population busy in making hay. The hay-field or tun (I remember the word from its likeness to tunny-fish) has to be prepared by removing the hummocks or bumps, into which all the soil of

Iceland which is not rock or lava seems to have bulged out, and making it flat as a bowling-green. The houses of the farmers and clergymen (there are none other) are all exactly alike. At a little distance they make rather an imposing figure, having many gables, like an Elizabethan country house; but on a nearer approach the greater part is found to consist of appurtenances, such as barn, stables, fish-stock-house, tool-house, etc., etc. In fact, the actual house contains only one sitting-room, which is always secured by four doors, one within the other, to keep out the violent wind that blows in winter. The walls of the house are of stones and peat, and a crop of grass always grows on the roof.

The churches are of wood brought from Norway, and dragged by horses up the country. The church of Reykjavik is the only exception, being of stone, and is considered a marvel.

Darwin had been particularly anxious to visit Reykholt, in order that he might inspect the bath of Snorro Sturluson, a distinguished bard and warrior who had composed many songs, and killed many people in his day.

The bath still exists—a large circular piece of masonry—and inspired me with much respect for the defunct Snorro, who seems to have been "*avant son*

siècle" as regarded ablutions. The water from a contiguous hot spring still trickles into the bath, but alas! it was choked up with weeds and dirt, and was of no use to us.

The clergyman asked us to his house to take coffee, and here it was that the unfortunate Mr. X. came to dire disgrace. As I have before hinted, he had some knowledge of the classics, and here he rashly attempted to reply to the clergyman in the Latin tongue. After a few syllables he stopped, grew very red, then utterly broke down. "*Vox faucibus hæsit*" would have been the most appropriate quotation he could have cited, had he had the presence of mind. The clergyman eyed him with undisguised contempt, and I pitied him; from my heart I pitied him.

We sent our baggage-horses next day up the valley, while we galloped three miles in a contrary direction, to look at a hot spring that bursts from a rock in the very bed of the river. Having inspected this natural curiosity, we returned, and followed our train through very pretty scenery, by the side of a river that comes tumbling down blue and white, the colour of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, like a particular kind of Derbyshire spar. We then passed some hills to the left, crossed the infant Hvita, and in the evening encamped on a

grassy sward at Kalmanstunga, a waterfall close to our tent, and snow and glaciers to our right.

The next day was the most momentous in all our journey. It was put to long debate whether we should attempt the ascent of Eyrik's Jokul, a mountain which had never been ascended by foreigner or Icelander. The reasons assigned in favour of going up were various. M'Diarmid, being by nature and constitution a sort of Spartan, was in favour of anything that entailed fatigue or endurance. Another said Eyrik's Jokul was the Key of Iceland, and it would redound to our glory. A third remarked that it would be a jolly lark. Mr. X. was decidedly averse to going up. He observed that in case we met glaciers we had no ropes and no hatchet, and he made some incoherent remarks about a mountain in Mexico. As Umbra, I was ready to go or stay. At last it was resolved by a large majority to make the attempt; but what with bathing and breakfasting, and debating and preparing, half the day was consumed, and it was eleven o'clock when we started. We then rode as quickly as we could up the valley, having constantly to ford the river, and in two hours we came in full sight of that monster, Eyrik Jokul. His appearance and shape are peculiar: a scarped perpendicular jet-black precipice, surmounted by a dome of snow;

the latter, seen from below, like the back of a great fish, or the convex surface of a dessert spoon. For another hour we rode over the rough *débris* of lava, enlivening the way by killing two unfortunate wild swans, whose wings had not grown enough to fly, and who foolishly deserted their native waters to run up the rocks, where they fell an easy prey. At one spot it seemed our progress must be stopped, as we came to a torrent that ran through steep rocky banks, and we in vain searched for a place to cross. At last we all dismounted, and our horses, one by one, were made to leap down a place which would shock the nerves of a goat. To my surprise, they none of them broke their legs; and after witnessing this feat, I could believe anything of Iceland ponies. We left our ponies at the foot of the precipice. We had reconnoitred the hill pretty well, and ascertained that this was the only spot where the ascent of the precipice was practicable. At it we went. The heat was now intense; the loose lava crumbled under our feet; but after an hour the cliff was scaled.

There was now before us a level plain, which, of course, had been invisible from below, of snow and lava mixed, a mile and a half in extent, and above rose the great snowy dome. The level plain we soon walked across, and stopped ten minutes to lunch. And then

commenced that dreadful climb, "*il modo ancor m' offende.*" The recollection of it is still grievous to me; no glacier, no crevasses, no danger, no excitement, but sheer, hard fatigue: the snow, instead of being frozen hard as we anticipated, so soft and crumbling, that at every step we were plunged into it up to our knees. On we went, still up, up, up, occasionally changing the leader in front, in order that others might follow in his footprints; still up, up, up; and that horrid dome, the top of which always seemed near, but which, after long hours, seemed no whit nearer. Still up, up, up; till at last the resolution of some failed, and they announced their resolve to return.

And now it seemed that the ascent of the Key of Iceland was to be abandoned; for M'Diarmid alone, who, though just then the most tired of all, yet loving fatigue for fatigue's sake, was still indomitable,—M'Diarmid alone seemed averse to giving it up, when Mr. X., who was considered the most sluggish of the party, and was just then lying exhausted on the snow, got on his legs and made us a speech! First, he premised that he had been strongly against the attempt, but having begun, it was our duty as citizens of the great British Empire to go on with it. Secondly, he begged to observe that he had stood two contested

elections, which was much more trying than the ascent of any mountain. Thirdly, he made reference to a mountain in Mexico, with an unpronounceable name; and he concluded by saying that after having been up the latter, before he would give in to this Iceland excrescence (for so he contemptuously termed the magnificent Eyrik's Jokul), he would rather, on an important division, go into the wrong lobby.

At the close of this unexpected oration, our party divided; M'Diarmid, Mr. X., and the poetic Digwell, pursued their upward way, and in the course of another hour succeeded in reaching the top of the dome, which they described as being a large plateau some miles in extent; but I did not make out that they saw much more than ourselves, who commenced the descent, which was fatiguing enough. We had, however, the consolation of a splendid view. To the left, and lower than where we stood, were the glaciers of Long Jokul, Blafell, Bald Jokul, Geit Jokul, mountains which from below had seemed as high as Eyrik's Jokul itself. Range on range of distant hills loomed in the far distance, while northwards stretched a plain studded with innumerable lakes, sparkling like cairngorms in the orange light of the setting sun, while still beyond, a broad gleam of glory revealed to us the vicinity of the Arctic Sea. What

illusive enchantment will not light throw on objects most cheerless in themselves! As seen by that gorgeous sunset the region below us seemed like the realm of fairyland, yet when we came to know it better, it was nothing but a wilderness, dreary, waste, and barren. I might make comparisons about all this, and say how hope may dress the dullest condition of life in the liveliest colours, how the deceitful hues vanish, and so on. I might do this, but I will not. It is not the speciality of Umbra to moralize; besides, it is the truer philosophy to enjoy what is bright and sunny while it lasts.

One remark I made as we descended. The shadows thrown on the snow were so blue, that in some places it seemed as though indigo had been spilt on the surface. Once or twice I stopped to make sure it was shadow, and not blue rock. I had often observed before the blueness of shadows on snow, but never had before seen it near so marked, which I suppose may be ascribed to the clearness of the atmosphere. The moon had now risen; at the foot of the snow we re-united the divided parties, and all proceeded together till we reached our horses.

We rode home in three hours, as quickly as the nature of the ground would permit, and the moon

having disappeared, it required some care to pick our way in the dark. I can remember now how picturesque appeared the leading horsemen, splashing through the frequent fords. There was nothing very picturesque in my friends themselves; Englishmen in shooting-coats. But by that uncertain light, now lost to view, now emerging from shadow, they seemed worthy of being mounted brigands painted by Wouvermans. Even so does partial darkness in some cases, as excess of light in others, enhance the effect.

We arrived at our tent at twelve: our expedition had taken exactly thirteen hours in all. We supped. The Key of Iceland had been scaled. That night we slept well.

CHAPTER V.

NEXT day we rode to Surtshellir, a series of lava caves not far from Kalmanstunga; and three of our party explored them with candles. M'Diarmid preferred to remain outside and sketch Eyrik's Jokul, the history of which name I now for the first time learnt. It seems, a celebrated bandit, Eyrik, lived in this very cave, whence he issued and killed divers persons, and plundered much cattle; a Northern Cacus, in fact. For a long time his place of retreat was undiscovered, but at last he was unearthed and pursued. He tried to run up the great mountain, but not taking our line of country, was stopped by the precipices, run into and killed, to the great joy of the country at large. Having seen the great cave of Adelsberg the preceding autumn, I did not think it necessary to stumble over more than one of three lava grottoes. Mr. X. also had seen some cave with an unpronounceable name in America, and expressed his

contempt for all others. He had relapsed into indolence, but made piteous complaints of the loss of a tortoise-shell eye-glass which he had left on the top of Eyrik's Jokul. The others, however, to whom caves were a novelty, persevered, and returned well pleased with their journey.

"Eyrik," said Darwin, "deserved his fate; he was a low fellow. But now I will narrate to you an anecdote of a robber that will astonish you. It is intimately connected with the fortunes of one of the first settlers in Iceland, namely, Ingimund, who was son of Thorstein, son of Ketil, Baron of Romsdal in Norway. You know that country, M'Diarmid?"

"I know it well; there is a peaked hill—the Romsdal Horn—which has never been ascended except by one person; a lady."

"At the time I speak of, the country between Romsdal and Upland was unsafe by reason of robbers; and great complaint was made that Baron Ketil, the governor of the district, did not put them down. At last, irritated by the constant requisitions made to him, he sent for his son Thorstein, and gave him a severe jobation. He said, 'Times are very much changed from what the ywere when I was a young man. The present age is degenerating, and getting worse day by day. In

'my youth, men strove hard to obtain wealth and honour; but now, young men think of nothing but taking their ease, eating good dinners, and drinking too much wine.'"

"I tell you what, Darwin, you need not go to Romsdal to hear an oration of that kind. I remember very nearly the same advice conveyed to a friend of mine at the University, in a letter from his father."

"Well, Baron Ketil does seem to have been somewhat a '*laudator temporis acti*,' I must confess. However, he concludes his speech by telling his son that there is now a capital opportunity of his redeeming his past conduct by going and exterminating the band of robbers. He then politely showed him the door.

"The unhappy Thorstein pursued his way till he came to a thick wood, reputed to be the headquarters of the robbers; and following a path, presently came to a house. Fastening his horse to a tree, he entered the house, which he found empty; but in it an immense bed, and a table prepared for supper. Not knowing with whom he might have to deal, Thorstein concealed himself, and resolved to watch a favourable opportunity of attacking the suspected robber; for, says the Chronicle, in excuse for such conduct, he thought all stratagems fair against a disturber of the public peace.

After some time the master of the house appears, the tallest and strongest man whom Thorstein had ever seen in his life."

"I saw a strong man once," interrupted Mr. X., "who told me he had killed twelve bears with his penknife. He was a liar!"

"Very likely. The new-comer looks carefully round, and the appearance of the fire excites his suspicions; but after making a strict search, and failing to find Thorstein, who had crouched between the bed and the wall, he sits down and makes a hearty supper; he then retires to bed and falls asleep. Twice did Thorstein move, and each time his neighbour started up, but seeing nothing, fell back and slept again. The third time Thorstein seizes his sword and runs it through the sleeper's breast."

"Then I say he was a brute," said Digwell. "To kill a man asleep after supper is taking a base and cowardly advantage."

"It seems a cowardly action, I own," resumed Darwin. "I think Baron Ketil was right when he said his son had got enervated by luxury. However, the robber, though mortally wounded, was not dead, and catching Thorstein by the throat, he pinned him against the wall, and had him at his mercy."

"And I hope he squeezed his life out," said Digwell; "serve him right."

"He did not. He was the most extraordinary forgiving and far-seeing robber I ever heard of. He made Thorstein tell him his name and rank, and then observed, 'It is all over with me. Know that I am Jokul, the son of Earl Ingimund. I lived too fast in my youth, and to supply my wants I took to the road; this is the end of it. I repent of all the murders and robberies I have committed on innocent travellers. As for you, you would not be a bad match for my sister. Take this ring, and tell my parents that it is my last wish that you should marry Thordis, and that they should forego the blood-feud, which, between ourselves, is a foolish prejudice.'"

"You don't mean to say, Darwin, the robber acted and talked as sensibly as all that?"

"I do indeed. *Obstupuit Thorsteinus,* says the Chronicle, *tali magnanimitate;* so poor Jokul gave up the ghost. Thorstein went home and informed the Baron Ketil that he had crushed the robbers, doing in one day what the other had only talked of so many years. The Baron seems to have been rather ashamed of his former speech, and praises his son highly; but on hearing the whole story, and learning his son's

determination to repair to the court of Earl Ingimund, he does all he can to dissuade him, hinting that his reception will probably be anything but agreeable.

"Thorstein, however, is resolved, and goes to Gothland, the country of Earl Ingimund. He finds, on arriving, that the Earl is out hunting, but the Countess is at home, and to her he tells his whole story. On the return of the Earl, she informs him that she has news to tell him. 'Perhaps the death of my son Jokul,' replies Earl Ingimund. She says, 'Yes;' and relates to him the strange circumstances of the case. Ingimund appears not to have cared much for the loss of his son, but he was unwilling to forego the blood-feud, as such a course he held to be compromising the dignity of the family. However, after many *pros* and *cons* whether Thorstein is to be tortured and killed, or accepted as a son-in-law, that take up several pages, the mild philosophic counsel of the departed Jokul prevailed."

"Perhaps Thordis was like Muckle-mou'ed Meg," said M'Diarmid.

"I can't say. Thorstein married Thordis, amid great rejoicings both in Romsdal and Gothland. For his conduct in putting himself in the power of him whose son he had killed, in accordance with his promise given to

that son, he is compared by the historian to Marcus Regulus returning from Rome to Carthage. He is also said to have led a prosperous life, increasing his wealth by piracy in the summer and by attention to home business in winter: *Rem familiarem piraticâ honesto id temporis exercitio, per æstates, per hiemes vero res domesticas prudenter administrando auxit*—"

"Pray, Darwin, why was piracy at sea considered honourable, and robbery on land infamous?"

"Public opinion settles that. When Ulysses arrived at Corcyra, he was asked if he was a pirate; it was meant rather as a compliment than otherwise. A foot-pad was always reckoned ungenteel. Thorstein must have had a good deal of Baron Ketil in him, as I find him afterwards said to be tacitly indignant at the expensive mode of life of his son Ingimund, who stops with him a whole winter with twenty friends, eating him out of house and home. Thordis, however, turns it off by a graceful allusion to the spirit of magnificence which her son had inherited from his father. Ingimund, as I have said, planted a colony in Iceland, and by his father's express desire called one of his sons Jokul, in remembrance of his poor uncle, the Robber of Romsdal."

This tale of Norway was told us by Darwin outside

the lava cave of Surtshellir, in sight of the snowy dome of Eyrik's Jokul.

We started next morning early, and left pleasant Kalmanstunga. This was reckoned the most arduous day's march of all, as we had to cross the district called the Wilderness, the same that looked so delightful seen under the rays of the setting sun from the heights of Eyrik's Jokul. To Mr. X., who had once been thirty days in the "great and terrible wilderness," where the Israelites sojourned forty years (*pace* Colenso), the apprehensions expressed about this tract seemed rather far-fetched; but it must be remembered that in the East, camels can journey many days without water, or other food than the scanty wild lavender of the desert; while in Iceland it is an absolute necessity to arrive each evening at some spot where grows grass for the horses. The district before us was, for some fifty miles, first lava and then treacherous bog. Half-way, we change our horses. Many and many a lake we passed. Sometimes we came to soft ground, and had to retrace our steps, making a considerable detour. Late in the evening, we hit a valley where a rivulet was running towards the sea. Then we knew we were out of the scrape; to say out of the wood in Iceland, where no tree grows, would be a decided blunder. By the side of the stream ex-

tended meadows of the softest turf. Dr. Johnson said the greatest pleasure in life was to go fast in a post-chaise; but far more exciting is it, after picking your way all day through rough lava and a boggy Syrtis, to gallop over green fields. The horses seemed to partake of the delight. For eight miles we raced without stop, and then pulled up before a church, rejoicing in the hard name of Efrinupfr.

Next day we crossed over a ridge of hills, and came down on an arm of the sea, the Hrutalfjordr, and slept at Melar. I remember nothing particular about the journey, except we in vain attempted to get in shot of some Northern divers on a lake, the mention of which suggests to me that this Diary may be getting slightly dull, like that of the *soi-disant* African traveller, over which poor Gilbert Gurney fell asleep when he came to the passage, "saw some goats to the left." I shall therefore enrich it by the insertion of one of the most splendid specimens of poetry which I know in any language, written by my friend Mr. Digwell; and though loth to bring a charge of plagiarism against an author so distinguished as Mr. Alfred Tennyson, I would ask any person to candidly examine the text, and say whether the germ of one of Mr. Tennyson's most admired poems may not be traced in this effusion of my

gifted friend. Mr. Tennyson is now Poet-Laureate, and poor Digwell sleeps at Mossfell; but no matter.

DIGWELL'S LAMENT.

Comrades, leave me here a little while, as yet 'tis early morn,
Leave me here, and when you want me, let Ragner sound his bugle-horn.

I go, I say, to see a lake, but in truth to meditate
By myself in sad communion, on my wretched, wretched state.

When my uncle George did ask me to come to Iceland for a treat,
Little, little did I reckon I should nothing get to eat.

What avails it that the Geysers spout their steaming columns high?
Can a fountain of hot water hungry longings satisfy?

Skyr for breakfast, soup for dinner, and between my teeth I crunch
A biscuit, or a piece of kaka, hard as granite, for my lunch.

My curse upon the grainless isle! this vast and desert solitude!
Oh! the dreary, dreary moorland, barren, barren of all food!

When at night within the tent I lay me down and capture sleep,
Dreams of pleasure, dreams enchanting, on my wearied senses creep.

Joints of six-year mutton woo me, mighty sirloins smoking hot,
Beefsteaks, kidneys, roast potatoes, and of sausages a lot.

Visionary pots of porter before my close-seal'd eyelids foam,
And again I taste the comforts which I used to prize at home.

Fool! again the dream! the fancy! I wake upon my grassy bed,
Cold and hungry stare about me—all the lovely vision fled.

Still I feel the wild pulsation which in early youth I knew,
When I first did go to Cambridge, and my college debts were few,

Yearning with the large excitement undergraduate freshmen feel,
Eager-hearted, after chapel, flocking to their morning meal.

Hark! my careless comrades call me, Ragner sounds his bugle-horn—
They, to whom my appetite is but a target for their scorn;

They, the callous, if not cruel, at my first direst sufferings laugh;
They no crumbs of comfort give me, but a quantity of chaff.

Damn the Geysers, damn the lava, lakes, bogs, fiords; doubly damn
The skyr, although I rather like it when 'tis mixed with strawberry jam:

For the skyr does run quite through me, just as if I were a sieve,
And my much-perplexed interior emptier than before doth leave.

But the ponies now are saddled, and I must my own bestride—
Oh! my craving, craving hunger, when will it be satisfied?

The skyr, concerning which Mr. Digwell makes feeling complaint, consists of whipped cream, with a sour taste like curds, but was rather palatable when mixed with a pot of jam, which some Sybarite among us had brought from the stores of Fortnum and Mason. Although I cannot go so far as Mr. Digwell in his complaints about our fare, still I own we were occasionally on short commons. However, at Melar we stayed the Sunday, bathed, washed our linen, and M'Diarmid, the skilful fisherman, caught two salmon, which, cooked quite fresh, would have afforded ecstatic delight to the most scientific epicure.

Darwin and I took a stroll to see some famous battle-field where some one had killed somebody, but I forget the names. We left Lodbrog painting, and Mr. X. reading a pocket Lucretius. Darwin had taken these two in the morning, much against their will, to pay a visit to the Frankman or Farmer of the place, from whom he thought it probable he might obtain some information. I must observe that throughout our tour we always experienced the greatest courtesy and hospitality from the clergy and the yeomen. With the former, Darwin's name was a passport, for they were all acquainted with his great work on Scandinavian antiquities, and invited us to come and partake of

coffee; and the unlettered farmers, who were not so erudite, would, from pure good-will to the traveller, proffer us a bowl of milk; but he at Melar had proved an exception. . They had found him closeted with a drunken priest; both had seemed to consider the room of their visitors preferable to their company, and Darwin was much annoyed at the reception.

"The boor!" said he; "the foolish, idiotic boor! He seemed to wish to get rid of us."

"Well, you know the proverb," said I, "'*Charbonnier est maître chez lui.*'"

"*Maître,*" replied Darwin; "yes; but he ought to have been proud to see us. Why, just consider who were his visitors: a Knight of the Walrus—a man whom, I may say without false pride, kings and universities delight to honour; Ragner, an Irish peer, descendant of the famous Lodbrog; and Mr. X.,—he is a stupid fellow certainly, and went asleep over the Saga,—but the man could not have known that, and there is no reason he should treat him with incivility."

"Was Mr. X. put out?" I asked.

"That fellow has much too good an opinion of himself ever to be put out; but when I was telling the lout of some most striking events that had occurred on his own land, he gave a great yawn, and X. said to me in

Latin, '*Darwin, mi fili ne jacias margaritas tuas ante porcos!*' That was really well said of X.; I have some hopes of him still."

"I wish you would tell me, Darwin: is Ragner obliged to wear those hairy garments?"

"Not obliged, you simple Umbra, but it is his privilege to wear them—'*hirsuta 'bracca,*' Olaus Wormius terms them in his book *De Literatura Runica*—as it is the privilege of the Knight of Kerry to wear his hat before the Sovereign."

"Can you inform me of Olaus Wormius?"

"Certainly; I am always delighted to satisfy reasonable curiosity. He was a Danish author, who, besides the book I mentioned, wrote a curious treatise concerning heathen monuments. To him Johannes Mejerus addressed a complimentary set of verses, a vile parody of Horace's Ode to Fons Bandusiæ: '*Te flagrantis atrox hora caniculæ*' he changes to '*Te liventis atrox scanna calumniæ, nescit tangere.*' Can you conceive anything more detestable?

"Odious! It would shock X."

"However, this is a digression. Olaus Wormius gives the dying chant of Ragner when shut up in prison with vipers; it is in twenty-nine stanzas, and each stanza begins with '*Pugnavimus ensibus.*' It is translated by

him from the Norse into Latin; but as I fancy you are not over strong in Latin, Umbra, I will render it into English for you—roughly, but pretty accurately:

"We fought with swords!—My banner flew
In Gothland's gales, where young I slew
The dragon that laid waste the land,
The prize to me was Thora's hand;
My hairy breeches I did wear,
The skin of the Norwegian bear:
Vain was the monster's venom'd spite,
Those hairy breeks he could not bite;
My followers hence, with loud acclaim,
Ragner Lodbrog me did name.

"We fought with swords!—I sought the East,
And there I gave a noble feast
Unto the prowling forest beast
And to the yellow-footed kite,
So deep my trusty sword did bite.
My galley sail'd to Oreon's bay,
Where we did strive the livelong day,
One sanguined wound was Ocean's flood,
And the crow did swim in blood!"

"That is rather an exaggerated expression, is it not?"

"It is correct:

'Omnis erat Oceanus vulnus
Vadavit corvus in sanguine cæsorum.'"

"It seems all about killing," said I.

"To be sure it is. You would not have a Norse champion sit on his stool like a Master in Chancery, would you? No, sir, those were stirring times. 'Up and be doing' was their motto. To proceed:—

"We fought with swords!—Hibernia's shore
Long time my visit did deplore:
Beneath my spear's resistless thrust
Eight of her Barons bit the dust;
The orphan'd maiden then did tear
The tresses of her yellow hair.
When the dubious battle reels,
Not rapture more the bridegroom feels
When first in his enamour'd arms
He clasps a blooming virgin's charms.

"We fought with swords!—O well-fought field!
I raised on high my magic shield!
Submissive to my conqu'ring sword,
Northumbria now must own me Lord.
Now in air the javelin sings,
Now the pike 'gainst buckler rings;
Corse is piled on bloody corse,
Man on man, and horse on horse!
Oh, the joy, the burning joy,
When my foemen I destroy!
I ween he knows no greater bliss
Who does a youthful widow kiss!"

"Lodbrog seems to have had free ideas about beauty and booty, Mr. Darwin."

"To be sure!" answered Darwin, much excited, flourishing his horsewhip like a scimitar over his head, and bounding from one bump of peat to another. "Forwards!—charge!—unfurl the raven banner!—*væ victis*—spare neither age nor sex!—I cannot remember all the twenty-nine stanzas, but the unconquered Ragner was trepanned by Ella, King of Northumberland, to visit him, and thrown into a dungeon with snakes."

"So died Roderick, King of the Goths," said I.

"Ay, but that was penance. Ragner had no idea of penance; he died game. Hear the last stanza:—

"We fought with swords!—Now comes my end—
The serpents bite, my flesh they rend;
Ella I curse with dying breath—
My sons, avenge your father's death;
This will ye do, for ye are brave,
No faithless race Aslauga gave.
But me the Warrior Sisters call,
Me they invite to Odin's Hall,
Me at the entrance will they meet,
And lead me to the highest seat.
From foemen's skulls the mead I'll quaff;
Ha! ha! I die—and dying, laugh!"

"Ah, he was a glorious fellow! You will be happy to hear that his sons did avenge his death. They sailed over to Northumberland, and made Ella a spread eagle.

Let us hope that our Ragner will tread in the steps of his heroic ancestor."

"God forbid, Mr. Darwin," said I. "Lodbrog, though I doubt not as brave as his namesake, is a most gentle youth. Surely you do not wish him to kill eight Irish Barons, and kiss their widows, in one day?"

Darwin cleared his eyes like one awaking from a dream. At last he said, "What a matter-of-fact fellow you are, Umbra! What I meant to express was a hope that Lodbrog would prove a shining as well as a useful ornament to society."

"With all my heart," said I.

CHAPTER VI.

On Monday we left Melar, crossed the hills to the west, struck the Laxardalr, and at evening halted at Hjardarholt in sight of the Hvammfiord.

It was here, during the time that elapsed between our arrival and our meal, that this conversation occurred between Mr. Darwin and myself, as we lazily stretched on the new-shorn grass:—

Darwin. You are now, Umbra, at perhaps the most remarkable historic spot in all Iceland; it was here that Kjartan dwelt; even here!

Umbra. You don't say so! Who was he?

Darwin. Kjartan was the bravest man in all Iceland, and he loved Gudrun, the fairest and proudest woman, the daughter of Osvif; he was engaged to her; you hear me?

Umbra. Ay, and mark thee. I say, Darwin, do you think dinner is ready?

Darwin. Dinner! pshaw! I am telling you the most

eventful chapter in the Sagas. Kjartan went to Norway, whether on a peaceful or warlike errand I know not, but while he tarried there—Halloo, Umbra! you are not asleep?

Umbra. Not at all; I am all attention. I only closed my eyes to listen better.

Darwin. Well, while Kjartan was in Norway, his bosom friend Bolli, the son of Thorlak, persuaded Gudrun of Kjartan's infidelity, and married her himself.

Umbra. Save me from my friends!

Darwin. When Kjartan returned from Norway, and found his betrothed married, he took another woman to wife. Then Gudrun conceived bitter hatred for her former lover, and she instigated her husband Bolli to lay an ambush for Kjartan's life. Bolli reluctantly consented, and slew his too-confiding friend. On his return from the place of murder, Gudrun met him, and learned the success of her treacherous scheme. "It is now three o'clock," said she to her husband; "we both have done a good morning's work: you have slain Kjartan, and I have spun twelve ells of yarn."

Umbra. She was a deuced strong-minded woman, that Gudrun. When did she live?

Darwin. About the year 1000. But listen; the

strangest part of the story is to come. Gudrun married three husbands, and on her deathbed confessed to her son that the only person she really loved was Kjartan, whom she caused to be murdered. "I was worst," said she, "to him whom I loved most."

Umbra. Now, that is a very interesting story of yours, Darwin, and what is more, I believe it. I can fancy the jealous Gudrun never giving her husband a moment's peace till he went and killed the only man she cared for, because he had got married to another; that was a true woman! Queer creatures, women, Darwin—eh? They can't keep quiet, can they?

Mr. Darwin looked to the north, to the south, to the east, and the west, and saw no one. He then looked up, and watched a red-beaked puffin flying towards the Hvammfiord; it was soon some miles away. Satisfied that this bird of the air could not repeat his words, he squeezed me by the hand, and said—

* * * * *

They were busy hay-making here, as elsewhere. The clergyman asked us into his house to take coffee. He had a large family, and M'Diarmid good-naturedly took a blooming little maiden of six or seven years a ride on his pony, while Lord Lodbrog drew a very accurate sketch of his house and church. It was really very

nicely done, and when pinned up against the wall of the sitting-room had a smart appearance. I doubt not that, to this day, it is regarded as a *chef-d'œuvre* in the country around, equal to a Salvator Rosa. Mr. X. meanwhile had been looking over the books, and found they were all in Icelandic, of which he knew nothing, except one in Latin, in which he was speedily engrossed.

We took leave of the amiable clergyman at Hjardarholt, and marched westward ho.

"Pray, Darwin," said Mr. X., "we are still in the Laxardalr, are we not?"

"To be sure we are. You must know that; you were poring over the map for a whole hour last night."

"The Laxardalr is rather a celebrated valley, is it not? I know its name means the Vale of the Salmon; but in other respects?"

"It is indeed, X. There is not a valley more frequently mentioned in the Sagas."

"Whereabouts do you suppose Gris and his wife Kolfinna lived?"

Darwin reeled in his saddle as though a rifle-ball had struck him. "How, in the fiend's name," said he, "are you acquainted with that story? I had intended to keep it a careful secret, for I feared it was calculated to promote levity."

Mr. X. laughed provokingly.

"Well, it is very odd, X., that you, who would not read what I gave you to read, must go and rake out from a book in a clergyman's house such a piece of scandal; for I cannot deny that it somewhat reflects on the pure morality of the ancient Icelanders."

"Tell us, by all means!" we all shouted.

"To do that, I must narrate to you the whole history of Halfredr, Vandrœda Skald—Halfred, the Dangerous Bard."

"We have the whole day before us—narrate!" And Mr. Darwin commenced:—

"Halfred the Skald, or Bard, was born not far from here; the son of Ottar. From his earliest years he was addicted to satirical poetry. He was a comical fellow certainly, and his poetry often got him into trouble; however, it twice saved his life. Of his personal appearance, I only find it recorded that he had an ignoble nose, which I presume means a turn-up, or supercilious nose, befitting a satirist. In his youth he was in love with Kolfinna, the daughter of Avald. Her father, finding that he could make no proper settlements, arranged another marriage for her with Gris (which means boar, or hog), an old soldier, who had returned from Constantinople, where he had acquired

wealth. On the bridegroom-elect coming to pay his court, he was much disgusted at finding Halfred engaged in kissing his betrothed, and also shouting out satirical verses to the disparagement of him—Gris. I fear the vice of punning was here brought into play. However, after much quarrelling, Ottar forced his son to leave the country, while Gris stayed, and married Kolfinna.

"Halfred repaired to the court of Olaf Tryggvasson, who was busy at that time in converting the heathen, and he consented to be baptized if the King would stand his godfather: to which Olaf agreed, and presented him with a sword without a scabbard; 'for,' said his Majesty, '*Periculosus ensis convenit periculoso poetæ.*'

"He soon stood in need of his godfather's protection, for, having slain a man in a brawl, he was about to be executed, when he demanded the King's protection. Olaf promised to save him, if he would make eight impromptu verses, bringing the word *sword* in each. This he does in so brilliant a manner, that the King not only gives him his life, but adds a splendid scabbard to his former gift of a sword.

"He now remained the bosom friend of the King, till one Kalf laid a complaint against him that he was not a true Christian, but secretly cherished an image

of Thor, made out of whale ivory. Halfred denied this as a calumny, but as a proof of orthodoxy was commanded to seek out one Thorstein, a refractory Pagan, and bring back his head or his two eyes. In order to effect this, Halfred disguises himself as an old beggar, in the last stage of decrepitude, and meeting Thorstein, contrives to turn the conversation to wrestling, and it ends by their having a trial of strength. Halfred gets down his antagonist, and speedily gouges out one eye."

"Why, I thought that was an American practice exclusively," said Digwell.

"There is nothing new under the sun, nephew. Thorstein now found out who was his opponent, and guessing the state of the case, implored him to spare his other eye, saying he might live to do him a good turn.

"Halfred relented, and on his way home was reproached by his attendants, who asked him how he would face the King; on which Halfred turned out of his way, sought his calumniator Kalf, and gouged out one of his eyes. He then produced the two eyes to Olaf as those of the blinded Thorstein; but royalty was not deceived, for turning sternly to Halfred, Olaf exclaimed, 'Sir, these eyes are not pairs!'

"Having fallen somewhat in disgrace by this ad-

venture, Halfred travelled to Sweden. He is there invited home by a very strong man and his wife, who attempt to murder him in the night. He, however, kills his treacherous host, but is apprehended by the neighbours, tried for murder, and led to execution. At the critical moment, however, a lady of the name of Ingiberg inquires whether he is not Halfred Vandrœda Skald. Of this he gives proof; and so great was the fame of his compositions that the people immediately decreed his release."

"Ah!" sighed Digwell, "it was something to be a poet in those days. Poetry is a drug in the market now."

"Halfred, out of gratitude, married Ingiberg, had sons by her, and lived happily."

"Is that all?"

"No; I now approach with reluctance the sequel. His wife died, and Halfred besought Olaf to allow him to return to Iceland, his native land. Olaf reluctantly consented, saying he felt assured he should never see him again. Halfred landed, and with eleven companions, in gay dresses, rode up this very valley Laxardalr, where we now are. He comes to a house, and recognises his old love Kolfinna. Gris's proper house was in Langdal, a valley rather to the north of this;

but he had a farm here, where Kolfinna and her maidens came occasionally in summer. I am sorry to say that Halfred, being invited in with his friends, played the part of the Count Ory, the husband being away.

"Kolfinna always declared that force was used against her; and that Halfred, adding insult to injury, at night recited to her some additional satirical stanzas on Gris, as a supplement to those he had formerly composed.

"Gris came home next day, and being informed by his wife of the violence used against her, and also of the satirical verses, was driven nearly mad by the latter, and summoning his followers, pursued Halfred. The latter fled; but in his flight killed Einar, a brother of Gris, and gained his father's land. A meeting subsequently took place to see if the quarrel could be patched up; but during the palaver, Brand, brother-in-law of Gris, killed Galti, the brother of Halfred. It was then declared that the quarrel could never be satisfactorily settled save by mortal combat between Halfred and Gris, and both day and place were settled.

"At the appointed time, Gris appeared ready for the combat, armed with a long sword that had been presented to him by his former master, the Emperor of Constantinople."

"And Halfred?"

"Why, this is the most singular part of all. When he woke that morning, Halfred said he had had a dream, in which King Olaf had appeared to him, and besought him not to fight. Just as they were going to engage, some horsemen galloped up, bringing the news from Norway that King Olaf was dead. Then Halfred declared that it was the evident will of Heaven that he should not fight, and he accordingly declined."

"It was a very convenient dream."

"Some of Halfred's companions twitted him in this sense, hinting cowardice on his part; but here his enemy Gris unexpectedly came to the rescue, saying that when *his* master, the Emperor of the Greeks, had died—the one who gave him the sword—he had been so affected, that he could not think of fighting or any thing else, and he thought that, under the circumstances, Halfred was quite justified in not going on with the duel."

"I tell you what," said Lodbrog; "I believe it was a regular cross, and nothing else."

"Why, Gris's conduct was suspicious, I admit. He said that Einar's death was balanced by that of Galti; and as for the violation of his wife, and the satirical lines, if Halfred chose to make him a handsome present

by way of atonement, and would promise to compose no more verses on him, he would think no more of the matter."

"*Quocunque modo rem*," interposed Mr. X.

"So Halfred gave him a gold bracelet which had been presented to him by Earl Sigward, and then set sail for Norway. It is said, however, he could not help having one more fling in verse against Gris, as a parting shot."

"Is that all?"

"Nearly. On his way home he was arrested by Earl Henry, and for the third time was being led to execution, when an old one-eyed man came and interceded for him; it was his old antagonist Thorstein.

"'Would you save him who put out your eye?' asked Earl Henry.

"'But he spared the other,' said the benign Pagan. So Halfred again got off."

"Poor old Thorstein!" said Digwell; "he was the better Christian of the two."

"Halfred died at Iona. He put in there, being driven south by a storm on his way to Iceland, and was taken ill. His last words, in reply to the doctor about his illness, were couched in two facetious verses. He was buried at Iona. Perhaps his tomb is there now; I will go and look some day."

We soon came to Hvammfiord, and forded the higher extremity at low water. The scenery was of the grandest description; the sea smooth without a ripple; to the left rose snowy hills, in form not unlike the Cuchullins in Skye. A number of wild swans were floating on the bay with their cygnets, to which last an eagle at a distance seemed to be bestowing marked attention. Other marine birds were disporting themselves, oyster-catchers and sand-pipers, of which last we shot some for the pot.

I never remember a finer day, and the vast expanse of ocean, without a sail or skiff on its bosom, stretching out towards Greenland, and the encompassing mountain solitudes, presented pleasing pictures of repose.

I think the beauty of the weather must have inspired us, for we all commenced, each after his own fashion, a grand pæan in praise of the sea, reciting it strophe and antistrophe, as in the chorus of the Greek Drama.

M'Diarmid lifted up the strain:—

"Hail to the Sea! the great Sea on which I paddled when I was a little bairn! that bathed my childhood's happy home—even the misty hills of Morven—where my ancestor, Diarmid, slew the boar; where Fingal chased the deer, and wept over the fate of the huntress of Ardven, after he had slain Carac'huil, the dark-brown

chief with the red rolling eye. Oh, Albin, *siol nan laoich!*"

"Yes," returned Darwin; "hail to the Sea, which the sons of Lochlin ploughed in their dragon-barks! which the long serpent skimmed victorious; the Sea, which Thor, blinded by the spells of Utgard Loki, tried to lap up from the magic goblet; but the As, though a stalwart drinker, could not drain the '*asbeston poron*'—the quenchless stream of Ocean."

"Hail," cried Oxonian Lodbrog, "to Thalassa! which Xenophon's comrades resaw, and seeing blessed, at the close of their unrivalled march. Hail, father Oceanus! thou whose daughters visited to console the fettered Titan! thou whose Tritons blew their conch as I my horn! whose frolic Nereids pursued with many twinkling feet the Athenian galley through the flashing foam!"

"Hail to the Sea!" replied Mr. X., "that washes many lands; he is my ancient friend. I have known him long—by Calpe's rock, by Syria's shore. They call him Red where I wandered by him in Arabian deserts, and Black where he strikes against the dark Symplegades. Cold was he in the Bay of St. Lawrence, tepid in the Gulf of Mexico; but he is the one Sea. How quiet is he now! you may pat him on the head like an

old bloodhound; but some day he may turn against and rend you."

"Hail to the Sea!" resumed Mr. Digwell, "that rolls over coral reefs, carboniferous strata, buried ichthyosauri, and fossilized crocodiles! that contains in its bed the slow-stored deposit of uncounted æons. How mysterious is the voice in which he whispers to us of these primeval marvels! Oh, would that it were given to me to read the great secret of the Sea!"

"Hail to the Sea!" said I, Umbra, "rather than be on which, poor Panurge envied the lot of them that planted cabbages; happy, and thrice happy called he these, for they had always one foot on land and the other not far from it. Hail to the nutritious and food-giving Sea! that produces soles, turbots, whitings, mackerel, mullet red and grey, crabs, lobsters, shrimps, prawns, herrings, anchovies, sardines, pilchards, haddocks, flounders, oysters, cod, smelts, brill, skate, salmon, sprats, and John Dory; all that Ellison, when he dined with Elia, reckoned for nothing!"

Grand Chorus—"Hail to the Sea!"

"Good!" said Darwin, who was in immense spirits, and made his horse curvet; "I will sing you a genuine Scandinavian ditty:—

"Through sunshine, storm, or drift,
Still urged by favouring gales,
As the sea-eagle swift,
The enchanted galley sails.

"Her deck the Æsir tread
All armed with shield and glaive,
With Baldur at their head,
The beautiful and brave.

"Hide, ye Frost-Giants, hide,
Ye Trolls—seek desert caves!
To crush your race's pride
Skithblathnir cleaves the waves!"

"Who, Mr. Darwin?" I asked, "who cleaves?"

"Skithblathnir. Surely you know about Skithblathnir?"

"Not I. Is it man or woman?"

"A ship; the enchanted ship of Freyr. It was so large that it would hold all the Æsir, or it could be made so small that it could go in Odin's waistcoat pocket."

"That certainly was a most convenient transport," said Mr. X.; "if we could have them in our dockyards!"

"And who were the Æsir?"

"The Æsir," replied Darwin, "were the gods. Odin

was the Northern Zeus. The Trolls and Frost-Giants answered to the Titans in Greek mythology."

"*Mutato nomine fabula narratur*," quoth Mr. X.

"But to think you should not know all this! The amount of ignorance in this world is inconceivable! It is still supposed in Iceland that the Trolls retain exclusive possession of the mountains, and are not to be interfered with. They will not be over well pleased with you, M'Diarmid, or X., or my nephew, for getting to the top of Eyrik's Jokul."

"We will stand the feud of all their clan," said M'Diarmid.

"They are awkward customers, I can tell you. In the days of King Olaf of Norway, sixty of his knights set out to combat the Trolls, and came to a dark wood, when out rushed '*tres monstruosæ fœminæ*,' one of whom was big as a bear, with coal-black face, '*ursæ instar, cinericco vultu*,' says the Chronicle, and a male giant with two boys. They killed all the knights except four, who escaped to tell the tale."

"The deuce!"

"The last Troll was seen by King Olaf himself. He was rowing single-handed in a boat, and the King's galley with all its oarsmen could not catch him up. At last the Troll rested on his sculls, grossly insulted

King Olaf, and then rowed away and was seen no more."

"And the Frost-Giants, Darwin? You have not told us about the Frost-Giants."

"The poor Frost-Giants were a simple race, and the Æsir improved them off the face of the earth. Thor lost his famous hammer, Mjolnir, and found it was in the possession of the Giant Thrym. Thrym refused to restore it to the owner, unless he obtained the hand of his sister Freyja, the eldest daughter of Odin, in marriage. Freyja had no idea of making such a *mésalliance*, so Thor put on her clothes, and, accompanied by Loki, went himself as the bride. When he got to Thrym's court, he rather astonished the expectant bridegroom by the appetite he displayed at supper, for he ate an ox and six salmon!—that is more than you could manage, nephew."

Mr. Digwell only replied to this unworthy insinuation by a glance of mingled dignity and defiance.

"Thrym remarked on his betrothed's powers of consumption, but the wily Loki responded, 'She has fasted twelve days from love of you.' Thrym then audaciously raised the fair one's veil. 'What burning eyes she has!' said he. 'They beam with love for you,' said Loki. On which the deluded Giant gave the hammer,

and Thor cracked his skull with it, as you would crack a walnut!'

We had a very long march, and in consequence of having sent on our train, which we never caught up, were unable to mount our reserve horses. It is the only day I remember when my horse was fairly tired. At last we reached our resting-place, of the terrible name of Breidabolstar.

Next day, Mr. Darwin was much excited, as we stopped near Helgafell, a hill sacred to the god Thor, where the Icelanders, before the introduction of Christianity, congregated to worship that divinity. Indeed, so sacred was it, that no one was allowed to lift his eyes and gaze on the holy height without having previously washed all over; a regulation which I much commend, as it entailed cleanliness. The hill itself is curious, as being formed of irregular columnar basalt, and commands a fine panoramic view.

"My friends," cried Darwin, "I congratulate you all! At last—at last we stand on the sacred hill itself, which even the Christians regarded not without awe; for here, say they, after the establishment of their creed, the authority of Satan (with whom they confounded Thor) still lingered. And it is told how a shepherd in

the employment of Thorstein Thorskabit—that is, Cod-eater—when his master was out at sea, was at night tending his flocks, just below us, when he saw the mountain open, and a vast chamber all lighted up with vivid fires was revealed to him; and in it were a numerous crew carousing at table; and at the head sat old Thorolf Mostrarbarba, the father of Thorstein, who had long been dead, but whom he had known well; when suddenly all the company stood up, and with loud cheers greeted Thorstein himself, who walked in and sat down with them. Then the shepherd ran home and told his mistress he was sure that Thorstein was drowned at sea, for he had seen his wraith; and so the event proved."

"Why, it was like a scene in *Robert le Diable*," said I.

"Christianity was not introduced easily," resumed Darwin. "Olaf Tryggvasson began the task in Norway by summoning all the Wizards (so called) to his court, and inviting them to adopt the new creed. When they declined, he gave them all a sumptuous dinner."

"That was kind," said Digwell, "at all events."

"Ay; but when they were well filled, and had drunken wine, and were fast asleep, he caused the

doors to be locked, and the house set on fire. All the Wizards were burnt, except one Eyvind, who, says the Chronicle, by the help of his hellish art, escaped out of the window. He afterwards met a servant of the king, and had the impertinence to send a message to his Majesty that it was the last time he would ever dine with him."

"I cannot blame him. The Wizards, at all events, had not the gift of prophecy."

"Olaf then caused all the Icelanders who happened seafaring men to be in Norway, to be summoned before him, and he admonished them to become converts; but finding them very reluctant, he gave them the option of being baptized, or having their arms and legs cut off."

"Why, the propagators of the Koran were gentle compared with your Olaf," said Digwell, who was the most humane of men, and could scarcely bear to see a ptarmigan killed, even for his dinner.

"He took strong measures, I confess. If not *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.* However, the Icelanders retained their legs and arms, and gradually the new creed supplanted the old. You remember what I told you at Thingvalla of the grand discussion that was held there, and how, in the middle thereof, a boy ran with the

news that an eruption had taken place, and the lava was streaming down on the farm of Thorod, who exclaimed, 'The gods were angry at the new faith!' 'What were the gods angry at when all this old lava ran down?' retorted Snorri the Priest."

"Very ready in debate Snorri was," said Mr. X.

"There is a strange story of one Thidrand," continued Darwin. "Stopping at the house of Thorhall, he was warned whatever occurred during the night, in the way of noise, not to open the door. Hearing at midnight shouts, and thinking they might be the cries of distressed travellers, he went out to see. In the morning he was found mortally wounded, and had just time to tell his tale before he died. He had been met by nine women in black garments, on black steeds; against these rushed nine women in white garments, on white steeds: in the conflict he received his hurts. It was supposed that these were the genii of the old faith and of the new faith contending."

"Why, Thidrand," said I, "was like Mr. Pickwick between the two rival newspaper editors."

"Umbra," said Darwin, "know that ribaldry is not wit. Your remark is insulting, if not profane."

"I meant no disrespect to any one," I replied, "not even to Thor. I remember hearing that Mr. Montague,

at Rome, always took his hat off to the bust of Jupiter Capitolinus, saying he hoped Jupiter would remember, if he came into power again, that he had shown him civility in his adversity."

"I hate your rats!" said Mr. X. sententiously.

Darwin was now sunk in a deep reverie. "It might be found," said he to himself; "it might yet be found. If I could only show that stone at home, what renown would be mine! More precious would it be than the black stone of the Caaba at Mecca. At all events, I will make the endeavour."

"What stone are you talking of?"

"The Stone of Sacrifice."

"I have seen the Mexican Stone of Sacrifice," said Mr. X., "on which thousands on thousands of victims were slaughtered during the Aztec sway. It is quite round and flat, with a groove from the centre to the side to carry off the victim's blood, and it is ornamented with strange hieroglyphics; and I rode my horse up the pyramid-palace of Xohicalco, a hill not unlike this in shape, but the wild cotton-tree now grows on the ruins, and when I cleared away the tangled brushwood that had crept over the terraces, I could see sculptured figures of gods and animals, somewhat resembling those on the Runic monuments which you are so fond of, Darwin."

"Upon your word? This is really becoming interesting. You have certainly seen a great deal, X.; what a pity it is you are so indolent! I beg your pardon," —for Mr. X. slightly raised his hat; "I meant to say —so indisposed to read the Sagas. But I think I will make a circuit round Helgafell."

He soon disappeared. He returned late in the evening, bringing with him an enormous rock, which he said *might* be part of the Stone of Sacrifice; and he seemed to look forward with satisfaction to carrying it home, and raising a temple over it in England. The only objection to this was the strong probability of its breaking a pony's back before it reached Reykjavik. Indeed, so impressed were some of the party with this vulgar idea, that I regret to say they clandestinely rolled the stone down the hill on which we were encamped, and England lost the benefit of this glorious monument of antiquity.

While Darwin was absent on his expedition, a most memorable conversation took place in the tent, which I will record, but cannot even now explain the latter part. First of all, Digwell inquired of M'Diarmid whether the worship of the Celts was the same as that of the Scandinavians.

"It is a pity that Darwin has gone," answered

M'Diarmid, "or he would have explained it all better than I can. The Celts were called Druids, because they held their rites in woods; yet not always so, for their circles of large stones are found in spots destitute of wood, and there is a certain similarity between them and the Scandinavian monuments. The most celebrated spots of Druid worship are Stonehenge and the Clint Hills in England; Karnak in Brittany."

"Karnak in Egypt have I seen," said Mr. X., "opposite to *Dimidio magicæ resonant ubi Memnone chordæ*, which was a trick of the priests, striking a metallic stone; we tried it."

"Besides these," pursued M'Diarmid, "are in Scotland the standing-stones of Stennis, in the Orkneys, mentioned by Walter Scott, and the stones of Callernish, in the Lewes, muffled up to their waists in peat-moss."

"I have been there," said Mr. X.

"And I too," said Lodbrog; "when we got to Carloway a lady was so hungry from want of her luncheon, that she caught hold of me, and shook me as a terrier shakes a rat!"[1]

"Poor lady!" sighed Digwell.

"That was a good view we got from the top of the

[1] At this distance of time, I cannot accurately remember whether this adventure happened to Lord Lodbrog or to Mr. X.

hill this afternoon," said I, "over the fiord and its countless isles. It reminded me of the grandest view I have ever obtained from the top of Etna, when I saw the shadow of the mountain thrown over the island."

"Describe, Umbra."

"I had gone up from Catania, and paid a visit to that hospitable old gentleman, Dr. Gemellaro, who made us drink some very good wine of his own growth; that is one advantage the Isle of Sicily has over that of Iceland."

"Sensualist!" interposed M'Diarmid.

"His thoughts by day and dreams by night are about his beloved Etna. Vesuvius he calls the bambino, or baby-mountain. By his advice we started at night, in good time to see the sun rise next morning. After proceeding through oak forests and grassy uplands, we came to the steeper part of the hill, but there is an excellent mule-road, and in six hours we reached the Casa Inglese, where it was very cold, with snow on the ground. From this it is about an hour's climb to the top of the crater. We arrived there just before the sun rose; the wind blew the thick smoke away, and we had a clear view. What surprised me most was that the horizon seemed high up in the sky."

"It must be so," said Digwell, "if you consider

mathematically, from the large portion of the surface of the earth your eye would take in from that elevation."

"To be sure we saw all round Sicily, and right over Calabria and the sea beyond, towards Greece; and then our guide took us quickly round to the other side of the crater, that we might see the shadow. At first I could not distinguish it, but he kept pointing to what I thought a large purple mountain opposite, and at last, after gazing intently, and making out villages, churches, fields, and rivers, I convinced myself that this seemingly palpable hill was in reality nothing else but the shadow of the mountain which we were on: it was a sight never to be forgotten. We returned well pleased to Nicolosi."

"And what did you with Dr. Gemellaro's thermometer?" asked Mr. X.

I started with amazement. Was Mr. X. a magician?

"Calm yourself, Umbra," said he; "I followed you down the mountain that morning. I saw and picked up the thermometer in the red case which you had dropped; I recognised it, and restored it to my friend Gemellaro."

I confess a secret load of many years was taken off my breast.

M'Diarmid wore a broad leather belt or baldric, fas-

tened with an iron clasp, which gave him the appearance of belted Will Howard in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel.* I had long admired this unique article of dress, and now inquired of him where and how he had procured it.

"I will tell you," replied he, "though it recalls the most sad event of my life, how long-cherished hopes were frustrated. You must know that for many years I had addicted myself to the pursuit of science, not so much to geology, like our friend Digwell, as to magnetic influences, and to attempts to discover the true polarity of the earth."

"M'Diarmid," said Digwell, "I honour you. You recall to me the lines of the poet:

"'Sinnend der Weise beschleicht forschend den schaffenden Geist
Pruft der Stoffe gewalt, der Magnete hassen und lieben.'"

"I had been long in correspondence on this subject with the universities of St. Petersburgh, Stockholm, and Copenhagen, and at last I had arranged a method by which I thought I could obtain precise results. A suitable place was fixed on for taking the necessary observations.

"Some summers ago I started north myself to make inspection. I arrived at the Lofoden Islands, passing

on the way the famous Maelstrom, which as a whirlpool is much exaggerated."

"All bosh!" said Mr. X.

"I then crossed to the mainland, and proceeded north, in company with a Swedish peasant, from whom I purchased this very belt. We walked on foot, and we did not sleep under any covering, or wallow in luxury as we do now."

"Oh Lord!" exclaimed Digwell.

"Why," said M'Diarmid, "are you not now drinking the choicest tea—7s. a pound? And did not your riot doom a lamb to bleed at the Geysers?"

"That," said Digwell, "was all but a fortnight ago."

"However, we carried some dried venison, and we slept in the clefts of the rocks, instead of this choice pavilion—for so I may call my tent. And on the ninth day we struck the Alten River, which runs through a fissure in that northern wilderness. Three waterfalls precipitated themselves from the cliff, and after travelling over the barren Lapland fjelds, the sight of the deep gorge through which the river flows, rich in verdure of the pine, the weeping birch, and the mountain ash, a combination of the darkest and tenderest hues, was inexpressibly beautiful. The river itself is clear as brown crystal."

"Yes," said Mr. X. faintly.

"We joined some Laplanders in birch canoes, and shot down several rapids, not perhaps so large as those you have seen in Canada, X.; but still it was exciting. That night we slept under cover, in a sort of subterranean house excavated on the right bank of the river."

"On the left," said Mr. X.

"Well, when I come to think of it, it is on the left; but it is amazingly odd you should guess it. Next day we reached the sea, and the next I crossed over to Kaafiord, which was the object of my journey. Hardly arrived, I rushed to the spot where all my hopes and fears were centred, not far from the abode of the Resident; and in his garden is a summer-house"—

A deep groan from Mr. X. We thought he was ill, but he said not.

"When the lady of the house, who was very charming and lovely, informed me that a horrible crime had been perpetrated, the authors of which to this day have never been discovered. I was told by the lady, Lady—"

"Malvina," said Mr. X.

"You know her name?" said M'Diarmid; "you have been there? Stay! let me think; let me think! The two Englishmen present at the wedding! on whom sus-

picion never fell! Eternal powers! do I now after many years see before me the destroyer of—"

Here M'Diarmid's hand instinctively sought the place where his dirk would have been had he worn the Highland garb. Meanwhile, Mr. X. rose from his recumbent position. It seemed to me there was rather deep sorrow than fear expressed on his countenance.

"No," said he, sadly, "my hand did not the deed; but listen. The revelry of the marriage-feast lasted long, and to escape it I stole out into the garden; it was near midnight, but the broad light of day was yet in the Lapland sky. I came on my friend, horror-struck, in an agony of remorse, bending over a shattered frame, from the side of which trickled, drop by drop, and slowly oozed into the grass, the subtle fluid which had so late given life to the form at his feet. I helped him to bury the mutilated remains. We hoped that earth would hide them, but I see all that is hidden will some day be divulged; it is the finger of Fate!"

"And you did not denounce the malefactor! You aided him to conceal the evidence of his crime! Oh, on him and his will descend to remote posterity the curse!"

"Forbear, M'Diarmid, forbear!" said X., in a voice

preternaturally solemn. "Forbear, rash man, lest the curse you pronounce recoil on those nearest and dearest to you!"

M'Diarmid at first hardly seemed to take in the sense of these words; then he staggered. "Is it possible?" said he; and at last approached close to Mr. X. You might have heard a pin drop on the grass, as they whispered interrogatively and affirmatively in monosyllables.

"The?"

"The."

"My?"

"Your."

"B.?"

"B."

"Is it possible?" mused M'Diarmid; "is it possible? Yet there has always been a strange reticence on William's part when I have talked of the Alten. Had I known this, could I have placed in the hand of the destroyer the hand of--"

"Be not too hard on William," said Mr. X.; "the blow was struck from inadvertence, not design. Enough!" and folding his plaid round him, like Cæsar at Pompey's statue, he sank back on his saddle. M'Diarmid walked out, and paced to and fro before the tent. Me-

thinks I see him now, beneath the hill of the heathen god.

I looked at Mr. X. with astonishment. He seemed to me a sort of Wandering Jew; but he was already fast asleep! his conscience disturbed him not.

Presently the clattering hoofs of a horse were heard, and Darwin rode up thundering at fullest speed. Behind him toiled two men, bearing with difficulty the Stone of Sacrifice.

He dismounted, and held long conversation with M'Diarmid, who apparently communicated what he had just heard. Darwin was evidently much affected, and wrung his hands; they both pointed frequently to the north. At last they came into the tent.

The first opportunity I had, I took Darwin aside.

"Oh, Mr. Darwin, what does it all mean? Did Mr. X. really see a murder?"

"A murder, you silly Umbra! What do you mean!"

"The mutilated form?"

"Pooh, pooh! it is much worse. You don't suppose M'Diarmid would be so affected for the death of a Lapp or two! Why, the northern warriors generally took head-money as compensation. Gudrun took compensation for the murder of Sigurd; to be sure, she afterwards killed her two children by her next husband,

Atli, King of Hunland (not to be confounded with Attila the Hun, I think. *Mem.* to look up this when I get back), and she burnt her husband too. I hope M'Diarmid will not set fire to Lowndes Street, and burn his —no, I think he is too good-hearted for that."

"But the blood trickling on the grass?"

"Pooh, pooh! it was not blood! it was much worse; much worse! But you must be silent; it must never be mentioned! never! never! never!"

CHAPTER VII.

On our march next day, passing through a dry water-course, we noticed a quantity of jasper, lying in all directions around us. As we observed, we might have made our fortunes could we have shipped a cargo to England; but the same objection which prevailed against the transport of the *soi-disant* Stone of Sacrifice held good against the jasper, and we only filled our pockets much heavier than was pleasant. And now came we to a singular scene. A vast river of lava had run from a neighbouring mountain to the sea, much as the lava has coursed down from Etna to Catania; through this winds for a mile a well-planned smooth road, concerning which exists a tradition. It seems that two Berserkers, brothers, were anxious to obtain for one of them the daughter of a neighbouring chief in marriage. Whether the elder had priority, or whether they were to toss up, I do not know. The father, afraid of offending two men of prowess, gave his consent, but

enacted as a condition that they should first make a road through this lava in a week's time, which he judged an impossibility. At it the Berserkers went with the skill of modern navvies, and completed the road within the appointed time. Invitations to the wedding were accordingly despatched to friends and relatives. The father of the lady proposed to the Berserkers to take a warm bath before they went to church, to which proposal they gladly assented. The nice clean Berserkers! I declare I quite feel for them; what did the arch-villain of a father-in-law do? He turned on the hot-water cock, and presently one of the brothers was a boiled Berserker! The other, severely scalded, broke through the barred door of the bath-room *in naturalibus*, but only to slip on the raw hide of a new-slain bull, placed there in anticipation of an attempt to escape, and as he lay in that recumbent position a spear was ruthlessly thrust through his back. What the bride thought of the whole affair history does not mention; but what seems sad, though not at all strange, is that the treacherous murderer, being successful, was very much applauded by the whole country for what he had done. Perhaps he had a testimonial presented to him in consequence, and a flattering address, but of this I am not sure.

Musing on the melancholy fate of these predecessors of Macadam, we passed through the trace of their labours, and emerging from the walls of lava, cantered over bogs and meadows till we came to a gorge, renowned through Iceland as the Goblin's Pass.

I had intended to describe the Goblin's Pass to the best of my poor ability; but, on reflection, I think I will leave it alone. A precipitous mountain road, clouds and broken rainbows hovered over it; let that suffice. Later, we came to the Grundarfiord, where majestic mountains rise in terraces of trap (so I learned from Digwell). One tall hill reminded me of Ben Sulivan, *alias* the Sugar-loaf, in Sutherland. Here was a factory, and our provisions running low, we bought some biscuits which had been left three years before by a French smack. They were so hard that they could only be broken by Digwell's geological hammer; but when masticated, tasted not at all bad.

The following day we came to the Bulandshofi, a pass which possesses an evil reputation as the most dangerous in all Iceland. We were warned that a yawning precipice of a thousand feet descended to the sea, which would in all probability receive the falling traveller. But all this was much exaggerated; for though the cliff was steep below, and the rocks rose

high above, the track itself was excellent. I can imagine that in the spring, when the avalanches descend, the road may be impassable, but at the time I speak of, it was smooth, though certainly not so broad, as Hammersmith highway.

O my steed, my chestnut steed! with erect mane, like a horse on a frieze of the Parthenon Marbles. I rode thee that day, and not the piebald! I had all confidence in thee, beloved steed! why did I ever part with thee?

So, baggage and all, we safely passed Bulandshofi, and anon descended to a shingly beach, where the stones were piled up in a vast rampart; here came on a smart shower, and the shower increased to a storm, and the storm to a cataract, when we arrived at the factory of Olafsvik. Most fortunately for us!—the tent would have been carried away like a feather in the hurricane that now prevailed. Even M'Diarmid, who had vowed he would not sleep out of his tent in Iceland, gave up the idea, and we all sought the refuge of the house, where we received hospitable entertainment. The host was previously in a state that would have fitted him to act admirably the part of Count Almaviva at the close of the second act of the *Barber of Seville*.

Was it here, or was it not, that we met our excellent friend Jonson of Copenhagen? It was not here, neither is Jonson his real name, but he is too remarkable a person to be omitted, and I will put him in here.

Mr. Jonson is one of the most active and intelligent men I know, very amiable "*au fond*," and would go great lengths to do you a service, but he has a peculiar talent for finding out every person's weak point and rubbing them on the raw. First he reviewed Mr. Darwin's theory of Scandinavian antiquities, and though the conversation was carried on in an unknown tongue, I could see that Darwin winced. Then he spoke English, and satisfactorily proved to M'Diarmid that Ossian was an impostor. Poor M'Diarmid! it was the only time I ever saw him subdued. Thirdly, he proceeded to Mr. X., whom we all supposed to be quite impervious; but Jonson found out an open joint in his harness in no time.

"So you have left England, Mr. X.," said he, "before Parliament was prorogued? Questions of great importance may be coming on—eh?"

Mr. X. stated that the Session was nearly over, and nothing of importance expected.

"Who can tell that, eh?" returned Jonson. "But you have got leave to come, eh?"

Mr. X. explained that it was not necessary to ask leave.

"Ah, not of the House! but you told your Whip you were going, eh?—you call him Whip, don't you?"

Mr. X. grew pale, and was silent.

"At all events you have got a pair, eh?"

Mr. X. gave a deep groan, rushed away, and hid himself.

Miserable man! it came out at last, extorted by Jonson, that he had come away without a pair. Perhaps in the silent hours of the night this reflection haunted him; perhaps he saw visionary Divisions going the wrong way, and heard the name of him, absent, pronounced reproachfully!

But with respect to Digwell, I really consider Jonson's conduct was quite fiendish. He found out poor Digwell's weakness, his craving for chops and other unattainable comforts, and with an air of false, pretended sympathy, held out a delusive series of tantalizing dainties. I may add that Jonson himself was a sort of man who would just as soon have dined off rusty nails, like an ostrich, as have feasted at Les Trois Frères Provençaux.

"Ah, Mr. Digwell," said he, "it is a hard thing, a very hard thing, to travel in a country like this, where

one can barely obtain a mouthful of food. Now in Italy you might order a dish of ortolans or beccaficoes."

Digwell's mouth watered.

"Or in France a good fricandeau and poulet à la Marengo."

Digwell sighed heavily.

"Or in England, better still, Mr. Digwell; in England you might be now sitting down to a sirloin of beef and Yorkshire pudding."

Digwell could stand it no longer; he gave a loud howl of anguish, while Jonson surveyed him with the air of Mephistophiles triumphant.

On Lord Lodbrog alone the latter could produce no effect. Ragner possessed such a happy fund of good spirits, that Jonson's attempts to depress them only fell off like rain from a duck's back.

At Olafsvik, however, Mr. Digwell had no occasion to complain, as we fared sumptuously, and were after dinner all six conducted to a room with six beds, arranged like berths on board ship, one over the other, where we slept while the tempest raged without.

The morrow, the storm had spent its force, and as towards noon the clouds broke, and it cleared, we took our departure. Retracing our steps of yesterday some way, we struck to the right, and ascended a steep path

on the east side of Snaefell, the giant of these parts. Snaefell has never been ascended, and it was a question with us whether the conquerors of Eyrik's Jokul should attempt his impregnability or not. I rather suspect all had had enough that day of climbing in the snow, and that counsels of inglorious ease would have now prevailed, but it was settled for us by the weather. Snaefell was veiled in a cloud, and all the time we were close to him we never saw him at all, but were obliged to be content with the distant view we had had of him, three weeks before, from Reykjavik.

And we mounted higher, and a waterfall flung itself grandly over some basaltic columns. Even Mr. X. was forced to admire this fall, which, he said, reminded him of Regla, though he entered his protest against waterfalls in general, to the effect that, after seeing Niagara, they were over-puffed nuisances.

After passing some pasture-land, we again mounted, by the steepest path I remember anywhere for horses; it seemed as if we were going up like Jack up his beanstalk. We soon got to the clouds, and entered a mist worthy of Scotland; so dense, one could scarcely see the pony's ears. However, we knew by this time how well our ponies deserved confidence, and we clomb up to the top of the pass (which by the map I take to have

been over a spur of Snaefell), and then we descended as rapidly on the south side. In time we left the mist, and saw stretched below us the sea and the level plain, having gained which we turned to the right.

We could now ride abreast and talk a bit.

"Upon my word," said Darwin, "Jonson was too bad last night, going on as he did to M'Diarmid about Ossian; he scarcely showed the respect due to him. Did you ever see the Gaelic Ode addressed to M'Diarmid by Phelim Phaidrig, the Highland Bard? It is magnificent; it begins thus:—

"'Thou son of him who slew the boar,
Who by the boar himself was slain.'"

"Well, Diarmid was not the only man that ever died by a bore," said Mr. X. "I have been nearly killed by one myself once or twice."

"In Barbary?"

"No; in Westminster!"

"Ho! ho! ho!" shouted Darwin; "you are waxing facetious, are you? Is Saul among the prophets?"

"My name is Paul, not Saul," said Mr. X. gravely.

"Look there!" cried Digwell.

We looked up, and saw what appeared the semblance of a castle on the flank of the mountain: wall, battle

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ment, and barbican, keep and towers, so completely had Nature in her caprice moulded her work into the likeness of man's architecture.

"It must be the castle of Utgard Loki," said Darwin, "where he deluded Thor. We are on enchanted ground; we shall become the heroes of a Saga. It must be an illusion. See! it vanishes from our sight!"

"As we ride on, we change our view of it," said M'Diarmid sagaciously. "Ride back a little, and you will see it again."

Mr. Digwell here recited to an indescribable-tune, if for tune he meant it:—

Hast thou seen the stately Castle, the Castle by the sea?
Rose and golden clouds float o'er it, a gorgeous canopy;

Wall and buttress all are mirrored in the crystal flood below,
And the turrets seem to mingle with the sunset's crimson glow.

Yes, I have seen the Castle, the proud Castle by the sea—
The moon shone on it with dim gleam, the mist clung mournfully.

The winds and waves, were they at play? did they gladsome music make?
And from the hall burst revelry? did the festal song awake?

The winds were hushed, the waves were still, they had forgot to throb,
And from the hall came dirge-like strains, and heard I many a sob.

Upon the ramparts didst thou see the Monarch and his Queen,
Conspicuous with their crowns of gold, and purple mantles sheen ?

And gazed they tenderly upon a Maiden wondrous fair,
Fair as the Sun on summer morn, glanced bright her golden hair ?

I saw the parents twain, in sooth, but they wore no crown of gold,
They were in sable garments clad—no Maid did I behold.

"Very pretty, Digwell; very pretty. Are those your own?"

"Dear me, no; a translation of Uhland. I was in Germany once, and like their ballads.

"'Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten
Dass ich so traurig bin;
Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten
Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn.

"'Die Luft ist kühl, und es dunkelt
Und ruhig fliesst der Rhein'—

Ah, yes; it is pleasant, after a right jolly good dinner, to float down the Rhine, in the soft twilight, when the purple shadows from the purple mountains are reflected on the river; then the cadence of the German *Lieder* falls in dream-like music on the ear."

"You get very bad tobacco in Germany," said Mr. X.

"I once made an original poem on the Rhine," said Digwell.

"Why, you meet Byron on his own ground," said I.

"I don't think I am so great a poet as Byron," returned Digwell modestly; "but we don't clash. Would you like to hear it? What are you saying about '*Non Dî, non homines*,' Mr. X.?"

"Nothing, my dear Digwell. Pray proceed."

"You see, I begin at the beginning, from its very source in the Rheinwald."

"And go all the way to Rotterdam?" I asked.

"Exactly. I make the river speak himself."

"'*Rhenus loquitur*;' that is more than the Thames does, when he comes on the stage between his banks in the *Critic*. But go on."

"Where the soft snow drops
On the high hill tops
Does the shining glacier lie
On the crowning crag,
Like a silvery flag
Unfurled between earth and sky.
Still day by day,
As it melts away,
It is fed from the cloudy heaven;
In its dark-blue womb
In that silent tomb
To me is my life-blood given.

From its icy cave
Leaps my tiny wave,
Like the spray of a passing shower,
And men laugh with glee,
Who my childhood see,
When they muse on my might and power.

"Well, you see, I have started it on its journey; and then I come to the Via Mala on the Splügen:—

"Through the Pass of Fear
In swift career
My growing strength I pour;
With many a spasm
Through the cloven chasm
I writhe, and I shriek and roar!
In the darksome hour,
When the rain-clouds lower,
My gathering waters swell;
In the black abyss,
Where they tortured hiss,
They against their curb rebel.
Ere now I have risen
From my rocky prison,
As the tiger awakes from sleep;
In my fury then
The abodes of men
Like reeds from my path I sweep."

"Ah!" said I, "I know what you allude to, Digwell: the great storm, when the postmaster of Thusis was drowned. But go on."

"As a sinful child,
With passion wild,
Repents on his mother's breast,
I cease to fret,
And my strife forget,
In the calm lake lulled to rest—
The calm blue lake
That its name does take
From Constance' city grey—
Thence all purified
Escapes my tide
With the gleam of the sapphire's ray.
With thundering shock,
O'er Schaffhausen's rock
I my azure column shiver,
Then speed I forth
To the distant North
As the world's most famous river."

"Now, that won't do, Digwell," said Mr. X. "Why, the Rhine is a little brook compared with the American rivers."

"But I speak of historic associations, not of magnitude," returned Digwell.

"The Nile whips it hollow, sir, in that respect."

"Suppose I say 'Europe's most famous river?'"

"There is the Danube," said Darwin.

"The Tweed," said M'Diarmid.

"The Thames," said I.

"The Isis," said Lodbrog.

"The Medina," said Mr. X.

"Well, I will think of it afterwards," said Digwell, dismayed. "But now I embody in my poem one hundred and forty-two legends of castles on the Rhine."

"Good heavens, Digwell! we are not going to spend the winter in Iceland! You had better leave them out."

"What! the Cat and the Mouse, and Bishop Hatto's Tower?"

"Yes; drop them all."

"And don't you wish to hear how the syren fair combed her golden hair, as a German professor explained to me, before I could speak German, by producing a very dirty comb from his pocket, and passing it through his greasy locks?"

"No; leave her alone."

"Well, we come to Baccharach—Bacchi Ara, that is. Ah! the trouble I had to get in all the rhymes about the wines!—Hochheimer, and Rüdesheimer, and Asmanhausen, and— "

"You had better drop all that too. As we have no wine to drink here, it would be tantalizing to hear them all recited."

"Well, I have a touch at history, and I record the various races that succeeded one another :—

"In the days of old
Did the hunter bold
Here the bison's track pursue :
Upon my bank,
O'er the legion's rank,
Rome's imperial eagle flew ;
The Robber-Knight,
In armour bright,
From his eyry stronghold sallied,
Until allied
'Gainst lawless pride
The Teuton Burghers rallied ;
And war's fierce game,
Though changed, the same,
Has been veiled 'neath the hanging smoke,
When the cannon's roar
Along my shore
Oft the slumbering echoes woke."

"I tell you what, Digwell : you ought to bring in how the Army of Liberation shouted when they got their first glimpse of the Rhine ; that was a fine passage in history."

"I have been puzzled," said Digwell, "to know what to do about the steamboats ; they are a sign of modern civilisation, and *steam* rhymes to *stream ;* still, steamboats are not romantic."

"Certainly not; eschew them. Is there any more?"

"And with me blend
The streams that descend
From many a vale and plain,
They tribute pay
And I cleave my way
Through the mountains rent in twain.
I rush on—on,
Till my goal be won,
With a giant's strength I flee!
In old age I creep
Ere I fall asleep
In the arms of the mightier sea."

"Stop!" said Darwin, "*flee* is not good English; it ought to be *flow*."

"'The wicked flee when no man pursueth,'" pleaded Digwell.

"Well, let the Rhine be wicked. Proceed."

"The feudal towers
And palace bowers
And the poor man's cot I lave;
The white-walled town
And the fortress' frown
All are mirrored in my wave.
The gorgeous fane—"

Thus far had proceeded Digwell, when, in the excitement of the moment, he let his whip, with which he had been gesticulating, pointing the action to the verse,

fall smartly on his pony's side. The pony, surprised by this sudden stroke of poetry, showed his appreciation of it by a lively kick, and the Duke of Marlborough's saddle, which was much too large, and sat loosely on the pony's back, turning round, the poet in the midst of his declamation was capsized and came to the ground; fortunately he was not at all hurt.

"Why, this is bathos indeed!" said Mr. X.

"I was just getting to Cologne Cathedral," said poor Digwell.

"Well, never mind the Cathedral, and the Three Kings, and the bad smells of Cologne. But, my dear Digwell, you deserve a reward for your poetry. In early Greece, as you are aware, the prize to the successful poet was a goat; whence comes the word *tragedy*."

"I would rather have a sheep," said Digwell; "goat cutlets are very tough; however, I could manage one now."

"The Romans rewarded their bards with a crown of laurel, which was ironical, because the laurel is a barren tree that produces no fruit. But to you, my dear Digwell, I award this cake of chocolate. Chocolate, I presume you are aware, is derived from Chocola, a village in Mexico, as jalap takes its name from the beautiful town of Jalapa."

"I wish you would not talk to me about jalap, Mr. X.; the mention of it makes me feel quite queer. However, I am much obliged to you for the chocolate; it is really very good."

After fording three or four torrents, we reached Stapi.

Stapi, if it be possible that any one is ignorant of the fact, is celebrated for basalt. The tide rushes into basaltic caverns, and into circular inland cavities (resembling, I should imagine, the Bullers of Buchan, which I have not seen) lined with basaltic columns. In one or two places we observed columns lying horizontally, like logs of timber, piled one over another. I took particular notice of this, because I had heard that the Isle of Handa, off Sutherland, was the only place in the world where basalt was horizontal and not vertical.

Stapi, the extreme western point of Iceland, and therefore of Europe, consists of rather a large village of wretched hovels, tenanted by fishermen, who put to sea when the weather allows it. At the time of our visit their boats were drawn up high in the cove, the winds came howling from America, the sea was very gurly, tumbling with hoarse noise into the caves, and the sea-mews were flitting about restless, chanting, or rather clanging, a doleful ditty. I should say Stapi was a spot admirably adapted for the retreat of a wealthy alderman

who had suffered from excess of comfort and good living; at least such was my impression.

Our provisions were now exhausted; and that night the wind blew and the rain descended. It seemed very doubtful whether the tent, though secured by our boxes and huge stones, as additional makeweights, would stand against the force of the wind. The tent shook like a reed; still it stood gallantly; but in the middle of the night I was awoke by finding myself lying in a pool of water, which had somehow accumulated; and all the rest of the night the rain, soaking through the canvas, slowly trickled drop by drop on my face.

Now, I am not a Sybarite, but I boldly maintain this is not pleasant, and I observed as much to Mr. X., who was next me. I think he must have had a malicious pleasure in my misfortune, or he piqued himself on showing superior philosophy in a similar plight, or he was happy in being able to bring out two quotations; for first he informed me that the Spaniards had had a "*triste noche*" in Mexico, and therefore it was reasonable that we should have one in Iceland; and then declaiming

"Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit,"

he turned over and fell asleep. I hated him!

The morning came, cold and gusty; and it speaks tomes for the inflexibility of Scotch morality, that, though we knew there was comfortable shelter at Budir, three hours' distance, M'Diarmid refused to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath by travelling. He proposed to us all to go on, and to rejoin us next morning, but we were unwilling to divide the party; and with, I fear, small power of taking credit to ourselves for scrupulous observance of the day, stopped at Stapi.

I regretted to observe the incipient ravages made by famine in the person of Mr. Digwell. Hitherto he had been the most active of any, setting out the first thing in the morning, and the last at night to geologize and inspect lakes. But now he positively refused to go and look at the inland cavities, assigning the extraordinary reason, that basalt was only fit for ladies! That ladies are cleverer than men, I will admit; but why they are to have basalt exclusively reserved for them I have never been able to conjecture.

Darwin and Lord Lodbrog abandoned that night the wet tent to sleep in a hovel. Next morning we left Stapi—Stapi, the extreme point of our journey, as of Europe. Three hours of quick riding brought us to the factory of Budir. We met there another traveller who had arrived from an opposite direction. He was an

Iceland gentleman, with a pleasant, good-natured countenance, and his name I found afterwards was Thòrlacius. We exchanged a few words of courteous greeting; when, on hearing the name Darwin more than once pronounced, he inquired if any of us were related to the great Darwin, the celebrated author.

I think my friend never could have felt sincerer rapture, than when unbuttoning his pea-coat, and displaying thereby the Order of the Walrus, he answered modestly, "I, sir, am that Darwin whom you are pleased to call great."

Thorlacius started, so great was his surprise. "O friend!" exclaimed he, "for so must I call thee—O thou, dear to the heart of every true Scandinavian! do I see thee? do I hear thee? do I embrace thee? It is too much!"

They then retired, and during our half-hour's stay they discoursed of Harolds, Hacos, Sinfjotlis, familiarly

"As maids of thirteen do of puppy-dogs."

The hospitable merchant expressed regret at not having seen us before; but as we refused to stay, by way of stirrup-cup made us quaff a libation of egg-flip.

We rode the greater part of the day along the sea-

coast, but towards evening we had to turn inland, and came to dreadful bogs. It was very late when we came in sight of the church of Miklaholt, which stands on an eminence; but we could not make straight for it, but had to stalk it, as the sportsman on Scottish hills stalks the stag. For miles around were morasses :—

> "A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog,
> Betwixt Damiata and Mount Casius old,
> Where armies whole have sunk."

At one moment I was surprised at seeing nothing but the ears and neck of my horse, the rest of his body being submerged. Fortunately I extricated myself quick from the saddle, or we should both be there now. A narrow causeway of rough, loose stones exists in places; which, detestable as it is to ride on abstractedly, is the only chance of safety. Along this the traveller "pursues his way, and swims or sinks, or wades or creeps." Woe be to him if he strays one inch from this track! his horse flounders hopelessly in the quagmire.

At length we gained the rising ground whereon the church of Miklaholt had long been conspicuous. The rain fell in torrents, and we were glad to accept the clergyman's proposal that we should bivouac in the church. This sounds sacrilegious, but in Iceland, where

there are no inns, the church is always the traveller's refuge; so we arranged our saddles and wraps in the pews, and after cooking and enjoying a frugal dinner, we took our rest.

I here discovered a curious fact about Mr. X., which accounted for that gentleman's occasional readiness in making a quotation. Every night he wrapped himself in a large grey plaid, of which he was very proud; it had been, he said, his companion in the mountains of Mexico. I now happened to examine some scarlet letters on the plaid, and to my amazement discovered whole passages from Shakspeare and other poets embroidered in red silk. In fact, Mr. X. slept in a book, and could always refresh his memory by study when he woke. I inquired of him where he acquired this valuable repertory of knowledge, but he preserved an obstinate silence.

If I thought Miklaholt disagreeable at night, I thought it detestable next morning.

"It stands between the mountains and the sea:"

but to get to either you must cross that abominable bog, wading along the causeway knee-deep in water. I might almost go so far as to say that there is

"Water, water everywhere,
Yet not a drop to drink,"

for there is no spring or well, and it was with some difficulty that I scooped up enough to fill a glass to wash my teeth. But what annoyed me most was that these excellent people (for such they were) must needs be patriots. They were not discontented, as they ought to have been, but said they were fond of Miklaholt. Why, forsooth? No one will ever guess why. They said the vile bog produced such good butter!

Good butter! Gods of our heathen ancestry!—Thor, Odin, and the rest of Darwin's friends—she positively gave good butter as her reason! Good butter is a good thing, no doubt—far be it from me to disparage it; but is good butter a sufficient compensation for living segregated from the rest of mankind? for being cut off from the whole civilized community? for dwelling in a spot unapproachable, save at the risk of death; that death not by honest drowning, but by semi-aqueous suffocation?

However, I forget myself; it is no affair of mine—none whatever; so farewell, Miklaholt, and may your inhabitants prosper, though I wish never to see you again. I have left you, and am climbing up the extinct volcano of Eldborg, the crater of which rises a black, stumpy excrescence from the plain; which plain is covered for leagues with rough lava, so rough indeed

that we failed in our first attempt to cross it, but harking back made rather a clever cast, and gaining the foot of the crater, fastened our horses and ascended. Inside of the lip I repose very comfortably, out of the wind, and look down on the hollow, almost circular, and smooth with grass. I feel rather sleepy, and fancy I am peeping down on a gigantic theatre, as a Roman of the baser sort might have done, perched in the upper galleries of the Colosseum or the great playhouse at Verona, and below me are the gladiators fighting. Retiarius throws his net and is pursued by Secutor, and the unarmed Christians are condemned to face ravenous wild beasts, amid the jeers of that vile Roman populace—the populace of the Empire—and the arena swims with blood. Lo! a youth approaches me, with face pale but resolute. He has the semblance of Ragner Lodbrog: it is he. Awake, Umbra! awake! You are not at Rome, not at Verona, but at Eldborg in Iceland, and you must ride to-night to Hitardal.

And soon my chestnut steed carried me to the entrance of Hitardal, the fairest of Iceland's valleys, and there we rode over lawn-like turf, between ramparts of lava; and above us towered mountains of lava, fused into fantastic shapes, whence the rocks have taken the names of human creatures, though to my eye they bore

more resemblance to the uncouth colossal gods of Egypt.

* * * * *

How lovely she was!—the lady of Hitardal—not of a stately and aristocratic beauty, but of a beauty such as most commands a child's admiration—such as we read of in a fairy tale: the forehead and neck really white as snow, the cheek the brilliant red that mantles on a particular kind of apple, her golden hair the hue of the sunbeams, partially concealed under the usual black Iceland cap, which, with its silver tassel, hung jauntily on one side. . . . . But she scarcely looked at Umbra.

Darwin admired this young lady excessively. He said she reminded him of Svanhild, daughter of Sigurd. He learned, moreover, that her father had been a Skald, or bard, in the land, and his enthusiasm knew no bounds; but on comparing notes, a serious difference of opinion rose between them on some point touching Iceland minstrelsy. They disputed; the controversy waxed warm; fast as Darwin talked, the lady talked faster. At last to one of his assertions she only responded with a scornful laugh. I thought it sounded very pretty and silvery; but on Darwin the effect was awful. What! he, the great Darwin, challenged on his own ground! He wiped his forehead. Later, she filled

up the measure of her offence. Lodbrog and Darwin had both bought two sealskin bags, which the Icelanders call their souls, as in travelling they contain all that is precious to them.[1] Darwin had also procured from the peasantry some very curious ancient Icelandic ornaments which they were ready to sell. With great courtesy, and with generous forgetfulness of her Skaldic victory, he offered her the choice of two brooches, if she wished to become the purchaser of either. With the same delightful ringing laugh, she thanked him, and said she must have both. This was too much.

"They are all the same," whispered he to me.

[1] Part of this narrative having appeared before in print, I learned with the greatest regret that doubts have been entertained in some quarters respecting its entire truth. To remove these, I thought I could not do better than write to Lord Lodbrog and Mr. X., asking them if they would produce the "souls" in evidence; for after the events detailed in the last chapter, Mr. X. appropriated to himself the sealskin of Darwin (Mr. X. *says* he bought it of Darwin, and paid for it, but that it is not the custom to give or take receipts in Iceland). The distance and uncertainty of communication have prevented my obtaining a reply from Lord Lodbrog; but I have received a very *angry*, intemperate letter from Mr. X. First, he complains of gross breach of confidence on my part. Secondly, he says I have described his character quite wrongly, and that he could have talked much more if he had chosen, but that he did not choose. However, he does me the justice to say that all the main facts are correctly stated, and that if any persons doubt them, he is quite ready to show them his "soul," which he still possesses, in corroboration of my history, any time they like to call on him.

"Gudrun and Brynhildir went to wash their hair in the Rhine. You would have thought the Rhine big enough for any two women to wash their hair in, but it was not. Most unreasonable; they must needs go and quarrel about which had the best place. And what was the consequence? Murder, sir! fratricide, sir! infanticide, sir! conjugicide, sir!"

"Don't, Mr. Darwin! pray don't! I declare you quite frighten me," said I.

"And then there was poor Gunnar."

"What of him?"

"His wife Hallgerda got him into so many scrapes, that he was warned his life was not safe if he remained in Iceland, but he could not tear himself away. One day his enemies surrounded his house; when he had shot eight, his bowstring broke, and he requested Hallgerda to give him one of her long curls to fit to the bow."

"And she gave it like a lady of Carthage?" said Lodbrog.

"She asked if his life absolutely depended on it. 'Absolutely,' said he. 'Then you will please to remember that you gave me a box on the ear three years ago,' retorted his spouse. And Gunnar was killed before her face."

This anecdote made a deep impression.

"Revenge is sweet, especially to women," said Digwell.

"But he should not have boxed her ears," said Lodbrog.

"*Manet altâ mente repostum*," said Mr. X.

"Mrs. Jonathan Wild," said I.

"A Highland wife would not have acted so," said M'Diarmid.

Darwin said no more, but shook his head like Lord Burleigh, and stood with folded arms, looking upwards.

* * * * *

That night the Northern Streamers played in the sky with pellucid lustre. Wavering, flickering, radiating, the silver light took ever-varying shapes, and now it hangs like a transparent shroud in the heavens. Was it an omen?

* * * * *

We started in the morning, and, for the first time, Lord Lodbrog seemed pensive, and I gained from him the secret of his melancholy. He had sworn, at different times, to six different ladies, that he would bring them home the plumage of the Great Awk, to decorate their respective hats. Now I believe the Great Awk possessed very little plumage, being a sort of hyperborean Dodo.

But, beyond this, another serious difficulty presented itself. The Great Awk was nowhere to be discovered. The last of his race was seen at the beginning of the century, winging his way, singed, from the eruption of a volcano, which, differing as he did in constitution from his cousin, the Phœnix, had not agreed with him. He was seen to make for an isle in the sea, and from that day was seen no more. In vain I attempted to comfort Ragner, by advising him to lay before the six a candid statement of these facts. It would not do. How could Ragner present himself in England forsworn?

One of the chief attractions in Iceland travelling is the intense brightness of colour. I have before mentioned the vivid clearness of the atmosphere, but even when the sky is clouded brilliant hues surround. Yonder hill of green grass, mixed with red, seems a mountain of blooming heather, but the scarlet tints are of burnt scoria. Often and often have I thought that the sun was shining partially on distant hill-tops, and only after closer observation could bring myself to be convinced that the apparent sunshine was fawn-coloured ash or sand, and that the seeming shadow with which it contrasted was dark-grey pumice-stone.

We slept at Bordhal, and next morning girded ourselves to pass the broad Hvitá. We had thought it

would have been necessary to take the luggage over in a ferry-boat and swim the horses over, but a farmer engaged to show us a ford, and as this saved a detour of some hours, we intrusted ourselves to his guidance.

He accordingly took us to a spot near the junction of the Hvitá and Nordrá, and boldly our cavalcade plunged into the broad stream, which flowed at a rapid pace, and bravely our horses breasted the force of the current. Every now and then it seemed impossible they could maintain their footing, and must swim for it:

> "But by good heart and our Lady's grace,
> We gained at length the landing-place"

with very little wetting. First we crossed the Hvitá and then we forded the Nordrá, and bidding our guide adieu, with hearty thanks, we rode on, and encamped that night, in a bitter cold wind, on the borders of the Hval Fiord, in front of the Promontory of Akraness.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLEASANT it is at the close of a long journey to arrive and take your ease at an inn. Then stand you before a blazing fire, sniff the coming repast, and complacently repeat to yourself Shenstone's verses. Our situation was the reverse of this. Cold and hungry, we pitched the tent, after in vain searching for a place where it would be sheltered from the cutting wind. And now the fact was brought home to us that we were without any provisions. The last links were broken that had once made the biscuit-box precious in our sight, and the last morsel of beloved bacon had disappeared long ago at Stapi. A little soup was served out to each. Lodbrog looked pale and wan, but showed the courage of his race, and disdained to complain. Darwin tried to fortify himself with the recollection that Harold Harfager had once on a marauding expedition been as hard put to it; but there was a wolfish expression in

his eye that would have made it dangerous for a live sheep to cross his path.

"Ah!" said he good-humouredly, "if we had only Frodi's wishing-quern, as in the old Norse story, it would grind for us fish, meat, bread, and ale,—whatever we pleased."

On which Mr. X., whose memory abstinence seemed to stimulate, began to quote Shakspeare:—

> "Oh! who can hold a fire in his hand
> By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?
> Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite
> By bare imagination of a feast?"

M'Diarmid alone recognised with unqualified approbation that the party were now put on what he considered proper rations—namely, Spartan black broth; but seeing us all look rather glum at his views of Lacedæmonian legislation, he said it was foolish of him, he knew, but he would compassionate our unworthy weakness; that foreseeing some might be disposed to grumble at wholesome asceticism, he had reserved a *bonne bouche* for us, a delicacy the existence of which he had hitherto kept a strict secret, and he now volunteered to produce it. At this there was a shout, and a smile beamed on Digwell's countenance like the first ray of the sun when he reappears above the horizon after the arctic winter.

M'Diarmid went out to his boxes, and presently returned with a large, hard, dried half of a fish, which had been caught and cured some two years previously. He entreated us not to partake too freely of this dainty, it being liable to one objection, that it was apt to breed worms in the Icelanders who indulged in it. But his warning was quite superfluous; the smell was enough to knock one backwards! it quickly permeated the whole tent, from which Mr. X. rushed out, quoting as he went,

> "It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh
> Which some did die to look on;"

and Darwin exclaimed "Thorsteinus Thorskabitus come again!" Digwell was now desperate. Suddenly a thought struck him; he pulled off both his boots, and examined them with glaring eye. Unfortunately they had been every morning besmeared with a certain grease, called *Clark's Inimitable Repellent*, in order to make them waterproof: that morning they had had an extra application before fording the Hvitá. The inimitable repellent answered its proper purpose well enough, but had made the boots quite unfit for an article of food. Digwell's last hope failed him, and he sank back, resigned to his fate. M'Diarmid began to clean his gun, and Lodbrog to look over the feathers of

some birds he had shot, and wonder whether he could pass them off as part of the plumage of the Great Awk.

I strolled out. When we first arrived in Iceland there was hardly any night, but now the days had much shortened, and it was bright star-light. I found Mr. X. wrapped up in his lettered plaid, his head on a lava pillow, and smoking his pipe with great determination. I thought he looked too comfortable, and it irritated me, for I believed him to be a Big-Endian—that is, an Epicurean—at heart. Though not at all a wit himself, in London he drank champagne with the wits, and I felt sure he did not like going without any dinner; but the innate vanity of the man always prevented him from expressing surprise or discomposure at anything. So I sat down by him and said—

"You take things coolly, Mr. X."

"Sir," he replied, "do you remember what Cato the Censor said, as quoted by Aulus Gellius?"

"I know nothing about Aulus Gellius."

"All you do not know, Umbra, would make a very large book."

"I do not see what business you have to twit me with ignorance, Mr. X.," I answered, in a rage, "and I will not stand it from you. Just remember what an absurd figure you yourself cut when you tried to talk

Latin to the clergyman at Reykholt. But what said Cato the Censor?"

"*Si quid est, quod utar, utor; si non est, ego;* that is, If I have a good thing I enjoy it; if I have it not, I go without it: that was sound philosophy. We have nothing to eat, so we cannot dine; I have still some tobacco, so I smoke it."

"I wish we had a fire, Mr. X."

"I remember our Arabs used to light a fire in the desert, when the nights were cold, of the dry bushes. I think I can see it all now, as the flame would blaze up fitfully, and throw its strong light on the lizard-like heads of the camels kneeling round our tent, and some wild palms. Ah! time goes by, Umbra; time goes by! '*Eheu fugaces,*' Umbra."

"You have been a great traveller, Mr. X."

"Yes; I have gained my experience."

"Do you think we shall get home safe?"

"We shall return, Umbra. Do you see that star?—that is my star."

"What! do you believe in astrology?" said I, quite delighted to find such superstition in Mr. X.; but his answer disappointed me.

"Why, if you ask me seriously, I suppose I must say I have faith in Newton and Copernicus rather than

Pineda and Nostradamus. I can scarcely suppose a world was created some hundred million years ago to influence the destiny of the atom that has the honour to address you. Still I have a sneaking weakness for that star. Do you know, Umbra, I once heard a very clever man, who had been Prime Minister, say that the cause of the second Mr. Pitt's failure in all his foreign enterprises was because he had no star; and in serio-comic vein he mooted the question whether a Minister could be impeached for having no star."

"There is a capital story by Charles de Bernard," said I, "of a woman who makes three admirers all select particular stars for their worship; she bamboozles them all! ha! ha! ha!"

"Umbra, I regret to perceive that there is a startling levity in your tone about women. I am afraid you have been perverted by Darwin and Digwell, instead of taking example from M'Diarmid, Lodbrog, and me. I know what Digwell meant about his basalt and ladies; it was a sneer at the sex, sir; and I myself heard Darwin call that young lady at Hitardal a goose, because she differed from him about some event in the Sagas. No good can come of it; no good can come of it to them." [Little did I then think how awfully this prophecy was shortly to be fulfilled with

reference to Digwell and Darwin.] "No one may insult the sex with impunity. Were you ever at Rosslyn Chapel?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Because over the 'Prentice Pillar are carved these words:—

'Forte est vinum,
Fortior est Rex,
Fortiores sunt mulieres.'

Remember that."

"How comes it, Mr. X.," said I, "if you have so great a veneration for ladies, that you have never married?"

Mr. X. seemed rather uneasy at this remark, and puffed hard at his pipe. At last he answered—

"If you wish to know the cause, Umbra, the true cause—"

"Yes."

"It is—"

"It is?"

"The Grand Junction Brentford Tramway and Sewer."

"Merciful heavens!" said I, "what do you mean?"

Mr. X. refilled his pipe, lit it, and commenced what I must term the disgraceful confession of a Member of Parliament.

CHAPTER IX.

"'*Vuoi ch'io rinnovelli disperato dolor.*' Many years ago, before my hair turned grey, it was in 1828 or '29, I think—I know there was just beginning to be a talk about Railways, and Reform in Parliament—I met at a country house, a young lady, Leonora Blank. I remember the first time I saw her, I stared at her as if she had been a spirit, with her pale face and dark hair and eyes. Yes, I may say of her, in the words of the poet:—

> 'She was beautiful; her beauty made
> The bright world dim, and everything beside
> Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade.'

But why do I talk in this way to you, Umbra, who have no more poetry in your soul than there is in a Newfoundland codfish? For what are you but a sneering, scoffing spirit, a would-be sayer of good things, which you have not the wit yourself to fabricate, but which you pick up from Darwin and me, and repeat as the

mock-bird I have heard in the magnolia forests of South Carolina?"

I do not know whether I was more angry at the contemptuous insolence of Mr. X., or amused at his vanity in supposing that he ever did say a good thing. The real fact was, I believe, he had been much put out by my reminding him of his break-down in Latin at Reykholt, and not liking to pursue that subject paid me off in this way; so I only said—

"I have no doubt that Leonora was a faultless being."

"Was she?" replied Mr. X., with emphasis; "I conceived a violent antipathy against her."

"You surprise me. Why so?"

"It has often puzzled myself; but I believe it is a question of metaphysics. I have read in a French author that towards those persons who are destined to exercise great influence over your future life, the soul by anticipation contracts dislike, as if conscious of the coming tyranny."

"Well, it is a very odd idea. But proceed."

"I did nothing but study her faults. The way that girl used to snub her mother was what my American friends call a caution. At last I was so exasperated that one day I told her my opinion of her."

"With what effect?"

"I don't know what effect it had on her, but I know what it had on me. Sir, no river steamer, snagged and waterlogged on the Mississippi, was ever reduced to a more helpless condition than the numskull who—. Well, no one can resist his fate! Of course Leonora soon found out the mischief she had done."

"Did she give you any encouragement?"

"I cannot honestly say she did, unless leading one the life of a dog can be called encouragement. One day I was giving my opinion on passing events, when she said I had better hold my tongue, as it was very ridiculous for any one who was not in Parliament to have any opinion about politics."

"That was going too far."

"Too far, do you say?—too far? Why, such a sentiment strikes at the very root of our constitutional liberties. The Attorney-General might have been directed to prosecute for such a speech. However, I don't think Sir John Copley would have taken much by his motion if he had applied for a rule against Leonora. It was quite enough for me though. An election coming off in my part of the country, I stood, and after a hard fight came in. My opponent on the hustings said I was actuated by ill-judged ambition; I wonder what he would have thought of Leonora's conduct!"

"It is rather an expensive amusement, is it not, a contested election?"

"Very," replied Mr. X. feelingly. "When I next met Leonora, and told her of my success, she expressed scornful surprise that any one should go into what she called so stupid a place as the House of Commons. Contempt of the High Court of Parliament, sir!"

"I don't think you ever address the House, Mr. X."

"Why, my dear Umbra, living with me so constantly as you have for the last five weeks, you cannot have failed to discover that I am the most modest person living."

"Upon my word and honour, Mr. X., I had not found it out."

"Well, such is the case; it is almost a defect in my character; and notwithstanding my surpassing—hem! I mean I never imagined that I should turn out a Mirabeau; my shyness is in the way. However, I thought being in I must speak sometimes. I remember the first time I was going to speak, the House insisted on dividing before dinner. I would rather take a royal Bengal tiger by the beard than attempt to address the House of Commons impatient for dinner."

"Did you try?"

"Not I. The fellow who got up they groaned at for

ten minutes till he sat down, and they would never let him speak since. The next time I prepared a speech, it was several hours before I could catch the Speaker's eye; and there is nothing more trying to the courage than waiting, jumping up, and having to sit down again a dozen times. However, at last I had my turn."

"And broke down, I suppose?"

"No, I did not; but no one seemed to pay the least attention. They went on talking, walking in and out, and next morning my oration of forty minutes appeared in four lines in the *Times*—just four lines. The dreadful work I had that Session: now rushing to parties with the hope of catching a peep of Leonora, now hurrying to the House in an old hackney coach (cabs were not invented) to save a division. The absurdities I committed! Why, you would hardly believe it of me, Umbra, but I positively once went to a ball in Baker Street, hearing Leonora would be there."

"You surprise me," said I, with covert irony.

"I knew I should. My idea of purgatory is a hot London ball-room; I have not been in one for the last twelve years. We are better off here, Umbra, in the pure air smoking our pipes."

"Well," said I, my teeth chattering, "it is very cold here."

"It is cool. If it was not for the great worsted over-all stockings my aunt Rose worked me, I think I should be frozen; they have saved me. *Mem.*, to take back Aunt Rose an Iceland cap."

"But to go on with your story, Mr. X."

"Ah! whenever I did see Leonora, she was always surrounded by admirers; one of the most assiduous of these was a Sir Charles Clumsy."

"You hated him of course."

"No, I don't think I did. He was a great Yorkshire baronet, with red face and large hands, intensely good-natured, and a lineal descendant through the female line of Sir Tunbelly Clumsy. I think I rather pitied him. He was very rich and I had nothing *minus* election expenses; but putting aside the adventitious circumstances of rank and fortune, I was in all other respects so immeasurably his superior, that any comparison between us seemed absurd."

"Modesty and merit both begin with M.," said I.

"They do," replied Mr. X., not noticing the application of my satirical remark. "Well, it was towards the end of the Session that I was put on a Committee of the Grand Junction Brentford Tramway and Sewer; a very important case it was, I assure you, Umbra. We fagged at it for three weeks and more. At last it was settled

that on a certain day the Committee were to hear the concluding speeches of counsel, and make their report. The night previous, I met Leonora out in the world. I I must tell you, she had one peculiarity: she never forgave any person who did not implicitly and unhesitatingly obey her commands, however impracticable."

"That was not reasonable."

"Reason was not Leonora's forte; she exercised empire like Cæsar, Mohammed, Napoleon Bonaparte. That night I thought I had made more way in her favour than ever before. As we separated, she said, 'We are going to Hampton Court to-morrow; you may come; you will take care of mamma and me. Be ready at half-past twelve.' You may conceive my rapture, when at that moment the thought of the Grand Brentford Junction stung me like a serpent, and I faltered out some words about the Committee. 'Committee!' she said; 'stuff and nonsense!' (contempt of the High Court again, Umbra). 'You will do what I tell you. Be with us at half-past twelve, or—.' I knew what that 'or' meant.

"Next day I went in a dreadful state of mind to the Committee-room at eleven, and asked the chairman to let me off the Committee. 'Quite impossible, Mr. X.,' said he; 'we have got to make our report to-day. I

should have to report *you* if you were absent.' A most worthy man was our chairman, but at that moment I could have slain him for his ill-timed facetiousness, as I sank back despairing in my chair.

"I remember it all only too well. It was a small room crowded with lawyers and others; and against the wall hung a map showing a network of roads, tram-roads, and sewers round Brentford, like those anatomical drawings of the human frame you see in the shop windows. I think my fixed attention on this map struck people. I was guessing what exact spot in it Hampton Court Gardens would occupy; and then the lawyers began. How grateful we ought all to be that we are not the wielders of absolute power; for I tried to find some solace in the thought of all the torments I would have heaped on those lawyers had it been in my power. I ran them rapidly over in my mind: the tortures inflicted by Dionysius of Syracuse; by Tiberius at Capua; by Diocletian on the early Christians; by Ezzelino, tyrant of Padua; the fate of Ugolino in the *Torre di Fame;* the practices of the Inquisition, the rack, the thumb-screw, and the water-trial; the pains inflicted on the Scotch Covenanters; and

'Luke's iron crown and Damiens' bed of steel.'

By the way, Luke is a mistake of Goldsmith's: it ought to be Zach; he was a Bohemian."

"Did you remember the account of the sufferings endured by Ensign Murphy and Lieutenant Lismahago, at the hands of the Red Indians, as recorded in *Humphrey Clinker?*"

"I did not forget them, you may be sure. There was one long-winded lawyer with a droning voice, that grated on the ear like a saw. For him I reserved the punishment proposed by Autolycus for the son of the clown: 'To be flayed alive; then 'nointed over with honey, set on the head of a wasp's nest; then stand till he be three quarters and a dram dead; then recovered again with *aqua-vitæ* or some other hot infusion; then, raw as he is, and in the hottest day prognostication proclaims, shall he be set against a brick wall, the sun looking with a southward eye upon him.' Are you aware, Umbra, that Shakspeare took that idea from Boccaccio? You will find it, as well as the whole plot of another play, *Cymbeline*, if you will turn to the *Decamerone*, second day, *novella* nine."

"I think, Mr. X., I might find some difficulty in finding an edition of Boccaccio at the Hval Fiord."

"You are right. But if this droning lawyer irritated me, his antagonist exasperated me still more. He was

a fat oily man, with a merry twinkling eye, and was a joker of jokes. I was thinking how he would bellow if he were placed in the brazen bull of Phalaris; and this idea caused me to smile a languid smile. The deluded man thought I was laughing at one of his Andskotans jokes, as we should say here, and he redoubled his attention to me. I hated him more than ever, and piled up imaginary tortures. I remember how a fellow-pupil of mine at College had wished to have his tutor, Jacob, who had set him a long imposition, placed in the crevasse of a glacier, and there fed with salt meat; but I dismissed this as too easy, seeing he would have an abundant supply of good water. At last I recalled with satisfaction the habits of the Dey of Algiers, who threw the Jews who displeased him—that is, who did not lend him money—over a wall, which he thought an amusing game. If lucky, they were only killed or maimed; but if unlucky, they were caught by hooks on the other side, and hung there till they expired."

"Good heavens, Mr. X.!" said I; "am I talking to a monster?"

"Not to a monster, my dear Umbra—not to a wilfully cruel man—not even to an ill-natured man—only to one who wanted to be with Leonora at Hampton Court, instead of being tied to the stake at Westminster.

I am now an intimate friend of both the gentlemen—the one I wished to flay, and the other I would have pitched over the wall.

"Nothing can last for ever, and even the lawyers' speeches came to an end. We were to consider our report. The rest of the Committee were divided two and two, and after much argument they all turned to me, with whom the decision practically rested. Of course, I had not attended to a word during the agony I was in."

"And what did you do?"

"I thought it safe to vote with the chairman, which I did, and our decision is appealed to as a monument of judicial wisdom to this day. I then rode as fast as a horse could carry me to Hampton Court, and arrived there, powdered with dust, at the old Toy Inn, where our party was to dine. The first person I saw was Sophy Bellasis, a cousin of Leonora's—a very nice girl she was. She went into a fit of laughing when she saw me; I was white as a miller.

"'What a figure you are!' said she. 'You had better go and dress, dinner is just ready. And, do you know, an event has happened; it is no use keeping it a secret, Sir Charles Clumsy has proposed to Leonora in the gardens this afternoon, and has been accepted!'"

"Pleasant! What did you do?"

"I rode back to town, and next day was at Liverpool and sailed to America."

"And Leonora?"

"Lady Clumsy is very happy, I hope. When I came back from America I met her, and she said to me, 'So you would not come to Hampton Court?' I thought it no good to begin about the Grand Brentford Junction and my ride in the dust, and she passed on very stately. She has several children now, and is grown very stout. My pipe is out; it is time for us to turn in."

CHAPTER X.

In the middle of the night I awoke, and heard a monotonous kind of chant going on. It was Darwin, who, kept awake by hunger, was repeating to himself some lines in Skaldic rhythm. I say rhythm, for rhyme there seemed none, only alliteration. I have since made diligent search for this Skaldic curiosity, but have not been fortunate enough to find it anywhere.

"Baldur the beauteous
Is borne on his bier,
Baldur the blameless,
Bale strikes the best!
To the silent sea-shore,
To the sad sable ship,
Carry him comely,
Carry the corse,
With his horse and his harness
To Hela to ride!

"Grief-stricken came giants,
Grief-stricken came gods,

Their sovereign and sire
Sighs o'er his slain son :
Draupnir's gold ringlet
He drops on the dead.
Mourns Thor on Mjolnir,
His mallet of might.
Fair Fulla—fond Freya,
Came with cats to her car.
Nanna, Nep's daughter,
The Nastrond draws nigh,
Lonely life loathing,
She lies by her lord.

" Flash fires fast spreading !
Flare funeral flames !
The corse and the charger
Consume with the ship !

" Haste, Hermod, to Hela !
Hie, Hermod, to Hel !
On Sleipnir swift-footed,
Spring Odin's swift son !
Nine days and nine nights,
Niflheim must thread,
Till thou gainest Gjoll River
And gold-glistening bridge ;
Bestow bribes on Hela
To bring Baldur back.

" Lament all things living,
Things lifeless, the loved ;

Wail men and wail women,
Weep rocks and weep woods!
Nature's kind nurslings,
Bonny birds, forest flowers,
Weep, weep, as ye warble,
As ye bud winsome, weep!
So Death may our darling
To daylight restore!
Ah! Thaukt the hag thankless
Tears' tribute denies!"

Here there was pause for a time.

"Any one awake there?" said Darwin.

No answer.

"Ah!" said he, "this is rough work. I should not like to confess it before the others, but I almost wish myself back in Cubittopolis. Let me see; how do the Runes proceed?

"Fenrir ferocious,
Fierce fiend, dost thou howl?
Champing the chain which
Cunning dwarfs forged.
From frightful jaws flowing
The foam forms the Vohn,
Rushing, a river,
Until Ragnarok.

"Woe, woe, to the Æsir,
When the Wolf wages war!

Bifrost, bridge brightest,
Broken will be!
Sun, stars will he swallow—"

Here, I regret to say, I fell fast asleep, and I cannot state what further prodigies are to ensue when Ragnarok—which I understand to mean the twilight of the gods—occurs.

CHAPTER XI.

"NIGHT's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops,"

was the first thing I heard next morning, as Mr. X., giving himself a shake like a Newfoundland dog, crawled out of the tent.

"Now, Umbra, get up! Look alive!"

The morning was so cold that I had the greatest difficulty in washing at a neighbouring brook, for my fingers were too numbed to hold my sponge.

While I was thus employed came Mr. X., and taking his position higher up—on the principle of the Wolf and the Lamb—and seeing me look very uncomfortable, addressed me:

"'What! think'st
That the bleak air, thy boist'rous chamberlain,
Will put thy shirt on warm?'

I will not proceed in the quotation, for we have no

moist trees that have outlived the eagle hereabout; nor would it be appropriate to say,

> "'Will the cold brook,
> Candied with ice, caudle thy morning taste,
> To cure thy o'er-night's surfeit?'

for you certainly had not a surfeit of food last night. Poor Digwell is very bad; that ancient fish-like smell quite upset him. Too bad of M'Diarmid, playing such a joke! Now for a plunge. Ugh! ugh! ugh! O Lord! O Lord!" The cold-water cure stopped *his* mouth for a time.

When we returned we found Digwell just awake.

"Oh, I have had such a dream!" he said; "such a delightful dream! Why did I ever wake? I dreamed that I had been riding all day, when I came to a town, and found I was in Trumpington Street, Cambridge; so I rode right up to my College, in at the door, and over the grass plat—which is not allowed; and I left my horse at the foot of the staircase, and ran up to the Hall; and it was Gaudy-day, and they all got up to receive me, and shouted,

> 'Digwell is come again! adventurous Digwell!
> Greet him, kind friends, he has returned from Iceland!'

And then I thought the Founder stepped from his picture in full canonicals, and said to me, 'Well done,

thou hardy traveller!' and he asked me if Thor had many worshippers left in Iceland; and I said, 'Only uncle.' And then he said, 'Let me not detain you, Mr. Digwell; you must be hungry after your ride;' and he took me up to the dais, and there, on the table, was a baron of beef, and turkey, and chine, and a boar's head in the centre; and—O Umbra! O Mr. X.!—a little roast sucking-pig with a lemon in his mouth!" A tear stood in Digwell's eye.

I saw my friend was overcome, and respected his emotion, till he asked—

"Anything for breakfast to-day, Umbra?"

"Tea, Digwell; excellent tea, and milk."

"No solids? I don't suppose M'Diarmid would let us kill a horse, would he?"

"What! *lætum equino sanguine Concanum?*" said Mr. X. "No, that would not do."

"Cheer up, Digwell, there will be plenty of beef at Reykjavik."

"I shall never see Reykjavik; I shall never get so far! I shall never see dear old Cambridge again; many a good dinner I have had there!"

"*Sternitur et moriens dulces reminiscitur Argos,*" aside from Mr. X.

"And, Umbra," pursued Digwell, "I leave you to

look over my papers. If you think the public would appreciate any of my poems or scientific observations I don't grudge the public having them. One scientific fact I have fully ascertained. It is always said Nature abhors a vacuum. Nature and I are quite at one on that head."

"Why, Digwell, you are growing jocose!"

"Ay; Sir Thomas More jested on the scaffold. I suppose Henry VIII., tyrant though he was, gave him some breakfast in the Tower before he started."

Sound your horn, Ragner! sound it loud! We shall all be in the doldrums! Pack the tent; start the cavalcade! Eastwards ho! forwards! march!

CHAPTER XII.

We pursued our road for some time by the much-sounding sea. I recall with mournful regret all the incidents of this day. I overheard Darwin talking to Mr. X. on some of the subjects of his nocturnal song.

"The All-Father," said he, "cast Hela into Niflheim, and gave her nine worlds, into which she distributes all who die not in battle. She answers to the southern Proserpine, and from her comes our word for a place of punishment. Listen to the account of her habitation given in the Edda. Her hall is called Elvidnir; Hunger is her table; Starvation her knife; Delay her man; Slowness her maid; Precipice her threshold; Care her bed; and burning Anguish forms the hangings of her apartments. Now, this is not altogether unlike the description of the infernal regions by Virgil. Do you remember the passage?"

"I do," said Mr. X., and he repeated with great satisfaction: -

"Vestibulum ante ipsum primisque in faucibus Orci
Luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curæ;
Pallentesque habitant Morbi, tristisque Senectus,
Et Metus, et malesuada Fames, ac turpis Egestas;
Terribiles visu formæ; Letumque, Labosque;
Tum consanguineus Leti Sopor; et mala mentis
Gaudia; mortiferumque adverso in limine Bellum,
Ferreique Eumenidum thalami, et Discordia demens,
Vipereum crinem vittis innexa cruentis."

At the close of this day's ride we surmounted a pass, and again saw stretched before us the open sea, and the plain near Reykjavik, surrounded by hills, peak beyond peak,—the same view which I mentioned in the opening lines of this journal. I know no greater pleasure than gaining the top of a high pass, and looking down on a wide country below. I then feel like a conqueror! and it is a very innocent pleasure, to obtain which it is not necessary to put many thousand people out of this excellent world, and to mutilate double that number. Mossfell, which was to be our last encampment, lay beneath us, and now I approach reluctantly the dread catastrophe.

Mine was the fault; mine, mine! Why did I insult Darwin's cherished prejudices? Had I not heard him once declare that the man who contemned the Edda deserved the doom of the Spread Eagle? and when I

inquired the meaning of that mystic phrase, had he not answered: "Our heroic ancestors, when they received a mortal affront, would conquer their enemy, and suspend him living to a gibbet. Then by a dagger dexterously dividing the ribs, and forcing them outwards, they made the mocker assume a happy resemblance to a spread eagle." I ventured to doubt whether such a proceeding was exactly in accordance with the doctrine of the New Testament, but Darwin had looked so fierce that I had not dared say more.

Our present dispute began in this wise, as we rode on amicably together:

"Umbra," said Darwin, "this is the last day but one of our journey. Now confess that you have never before in your life seen scenery so worthy of admiration as this glorious Iceland."

Now in my heart I did admire Iceland exceedingly. I had admired it all, from the first glimpse I had caught from the sea of the Murdalr Glacier, bristling with pinnacles of ice, like gigantic bayonets, even until now; but I think that horrid cold wind in the morning, which had chilled my very marrow while at my toilette by the brook, must have made me contradictory, for I replied—

"What! a country where not a tree can grow! all

lava, rock, ice, and bog! Better I love to repose where Lake Benacus nestles amid lemon gardens, or where the blue ripple of the sunny Ægæan kisses islands odorous with myrtle and cistus."

Darwin curled his lip in scorn.

"If," said he, "you cannot appreciate the sterner and sublimer beauties of Nature, you might at least feel the force of their historic associations. Dead indeed must he be to all the higher sensations of the intellect, who can tread without a thrill a spot consecrated by valour and poesy."

"I am not so insensible as you imagine," replied I, getting on my own particular hobby, and waxing, I own, absurdly grandiloquent. "Not undelighted have I watched the dawn break on the roseate temple of Petra, or seen the declining sun change the marble pillars of the Parthenon into columns of burnished gold. Not without emotion did I gallop my horse over the plain of Marathon, or smoke my chibouque by that lion-crowned Portal, where ascended the King of men returning from Troy, in short-lived triumph, when the shrieks of the doomed Cassandra were soon to echo through the Palace of Mycenæ."

"What!" said he, "you simulate an enthusiasm for such reminiscences, and cannot recognise the merit of a

higher order of literature! For what are Cassandra and Electra to Sangrida and Helda?—what was Homer himself, compared with the divine Snorro?"

"Snorro!" I repeated in surprise, "who on earth was Snorro?"

"Ignorant, soulless being! Are not these things written in the Saga?"

"The Saga, Mr. Darwin?" said I. "I believe the Saga to be a humbug!"

Scarcely had I let this imprudent word escape, than the Herculean frame of my friend was convulsed with passion. His eye glared with fury. Grasping the hammer of Mr. Digwell, which he chanced to have borrowed, he with one blow felled me from my horse. "Die, blasphemer, die!" shouted he, frantic with rage; and I have no doubt he was about to finish my existence, when the earth shook beneath us. A mightier power than —— was abroad. A long-extinct volcano, resuming activity, suddenly woke to life. With horrid roar, with hideous belch, a column of mingled fire and smoke arose, and an enormous rocky mass, ninety tons in weight, upheaved three kilometres in air, descending, crushed Mr. Darwin and his horse flat as a pancake.

I had read *The Last Days of Pompeii*, so I knew the

proper remark to make: "The earth has preserved her child!" and then, with the pain of the blow I had received, I swooned away.

* * * * *

When I recovered, soft and tender eyes were beaming on me. It was the Lady of Hitardal, who, passing with her train, dismounted to assist the wounded traveller.

* * * * *

My poor friend Darwin, whom I freely forgave for his impetuosity, had a noble tablet to his memory in the immense block beneath which he had been crushed. There he lies, buried like a Norse warrior of old with his horse; dying in harness, with battle-axe (that is, Digwell's hammer) in hand.

We caused to be engraved on the rock this epitaph, which, whatever may be its poetic pretensions, has at least the merit of being strictly original:—

"What needs my Darwin for his honoured bones,
The labour of an age in pilèd stones?
He, to our wonder and astonishment,
Was hid beneath a grander monument,
And in such pomp doth here sepulchrèd lie,
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die."

Around this we carved a Runic ornament, the pattern

of which the talented Swedish sculptor has copied (I regret to say without acknowledgment) on the pedestal of his spirited group, "The Grapplers," exhibited in the last International Exhibition.

Often does the Iceland peasant, as he passes the spot, heave a sigh when he recalls the fate of him who handed down to lasting record the traditions of the Scandinavian race. Often will the British traveller check his horse's rein to pause and contemplate the self-raised monument, beneath which rests all that is mortal of the brave, the learned, the enthusiastic, ay, and in despite of all his hastiness, the virtuous Darwin.

Darwin's was not the only loss we had to deplore. Digwell had been some time wasting away, and at Mossfell sank from inanition, almost in sight of port—of plenty awaiting him. We gave him whatever of sustenance was left, but he shook his head over the soup-can, and pronounced three times in solemn accent, "Watery, watery, watery!" He then bequeathed his military saddle, that relic of Marlborough's wars, to the British Museum. (For a long time it remained in the room west of the Megatherium, but I hear there has lately been some talk of moving it to Kensington.) After this his speech was somewhat incoherent. We caught some broken words, "That a beefsteak should be

dressed with oyster-sauce." A better or more pure-hearted man never existed. We composed for him an epitaph. I do not like it as much as the other. I cannot help suspecting that I have seen something like the two last lines elsewhere:—

> "Here gentle Digwell lies—a youthful sage,
> To science true as magnet to the pole;
> But hunger did repress the noble rage,
> Fell famine froze the current of his soul."

Neither did Lord Lodbrog return to England. Whether it was that he feared to face the six ladies without bringing them the plumage of the Great Awk, I cannot say, but he stopped and married the Island Princess, the Lady of Hitardal. From the romantic circumstances of our meeting when she brought me succour, it might have been expected that I should have been the favoured one, but it was not so. To my great disgust, she always talked of me as the "poor old gentleman," and she smiled on Ragner Lodbrog. She brought him, as a marriage portion, four hundred ponies, eight hundred cows, and six thousand sheep; and her trousseau was composed of 1900 blue fox skins. They have since lived very happily. Lodbrog built a fine summer palace near Skapta Jokul, where he exercises unbounded hospitality to all tourists who

visit him; only travellers are requested to bring their own biscuits, bread being very scarce in Iceland.

Our party was thus reduced to half, by death and marriage. The remainder sailed to England, stopping at the Faroë Islands, which are very curious, but I have not the heart now to describe them.

M'Diarmid flourishes, but is grown rather stout for a Spartan. I used to look at the Parliamentary debates in the papers, thinking that Mr. X. might bring the affairs of Iceland under the consideration of the House, but I have long given up that expectation. To be sure, there is nothing to be said about them. He, M'Diarmid, and I, sometimes meet at our club, dine together, and talk over our tour, "*die frohe Tage*" of our prime.

* * *

THE following verses were found among Mr. Digwell's papers, and clearly had reference to a large wooden stoup, or covered bowl, which he had bought on the journey. We took it to England and forwarded it to the gentleman to whom the lines were addressed. For a long time we had the greatest difficulty in discovering where Mr. Edward Evans, of Loch Garry, resided. No one knew of such a person or place, and we began to think Loch Garry must be what Darwin used to call, "East o' the sun, and west o' the moon." At length an advertisement produced the desired information.

"From Thulë the hoary
From Thulë the far,
The Isle that reposes
Beneath the North star.

"Where Jokuls snow mantled,
Right lofty aspire,
Where the ground underneath
Is caverned by fire;

* * *

"Where founts of hot water
In tall columns rise,
And clouds of white vapour
Ascend to the skies;

"Where rocks of burnt lava
Scarlet colouring take,
As the braes red with heather
By your own mountain lake;

"Where corn may not ripen,
Where tree may not grow,
But through greenest meadows
Where broad rivers flow

"To the Fiords environ'd
By desolate hills,
Whose hollow the Ocean
With throbbing pulse fills.

"From regions scarce knowing
The presence of man,
Where preys the sea-eagle,
Where floats the wild swan;

"From the shores of gray Iceland,
Edward Evans, my friend,
For your room at Loch Garry
A present I send.

"Your lip, Edward Evans,
Now curl not in scorn,
Let it show on your table
At breakfast each morn.

"In American forest
Grew its parent—a tree
Which the foul Mississippi
Roll'd down to the sea.

"In Mexico's Gulf
Long time did it tarry,
But the Gulf-stream at length
Did northwards it carry.

"It was borne on the surge
Of the yeasty Atlantic,
And the plaything became
Of the hurricane frantic.

"It drifted—it drifted—
Full many a day,
Till at last it was stranded
In Reykjavik's bay.

"'Neath the dark Akraness
Spied a peasant with pleasure,
The waif of the Ocean—
A surf-beaten treasure.

* * *

"This bowl did he fashion,
And his hand with skill plastic
Carved a Runic device
Of a pattern fantastic.

"In the long nights of winter
He finish'd his task.
Edward Evans, I send it—
Oh, cherish the Ask!"

BOOK SECOND.

IN MEMORIAM.

When last this hand in idle sportive mood
The record of these wand'rings strove to trace,
A harmless jest upon this page there stood
Which thou didst pardon—which I now efface.

For thou, the loved and idolized, art gone,
Thou, with all grace endued, and virtue crown'd,
Whose genial presence like the sunshine shone,
Whose wit did brighten, but did never wound;

Whose kindly truthful sympathy endear'd,
Nor reach'd alone to those of thy degree,
The poor and humble still thy friendship cheer'd,
Aid and sweet solace they obtain'd from thee.

And he who writes did bear thee holy love,
Such as the Catholic owes to his saint,
A love so pure that heaven would not reprove,
A love without alloy of earthly taint.

When last we parted, when in dark'ning hour
The tempest shriek'd, and hoarse the torrents fell,
No evil omen on my heart had power,
But trusting soon to meet, we said farewell.

I did not deem, when list'ning to the storm
Through the bare branches of the birch-trees rave,
I did not deem that in the spring-tide warm,
Those trees would blossom o'er thy early grave.

I ne'er shall watch again thy gentle smile,
The music of thy voice shall never hear—
An angel walk'd the earth a little while
And has departed to her native sphere.

BOOK SECOND.

OF UMBRA'S RETIREMENT, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER the events described in the foregoing part of this book, I had sickened of London, and had been for many years domiciled at Chatterville, when I first went there a small and pretty town in the West of England. Since then, like a lank schoolboy outgrowing his clothes, Chatterville has expanded into intolerable dimensions, till it is scarce recognisable as the same. Besides the advantages of a salubrious site, attractive rural scenery, and what the County Guide terms a commodious market, held twice a week, Chatterville arrogated to itself, and still arrogates, the merit of possessing the very best society. Nothing commercial, nothing brassy about it. No Birmingham coin passed current in Chatterville; all was refined and elegant, or, what was just as good, so considered itself.

Into the very bosom of this society I had the distinction of being at once admitted, bringing letters of introduction from Mr. X. to his relative the Hon. Mrs. Plantagenet Benyon. This great lady possessed by far the best house in the place, gave the best parties, and governed Chatterville absolutely. It was a despotism mitigated by great good sense and great good nature. One offence only she could not bring herself to forgive; and that was, if any one termed the place of our abode a watering-place. A watering-place, from her point of view, was a locality frequented by vulgar people in search of frivolous dissipation. Chatterville, she would always maintain, is a country residence not far from the sea-coast; however, she would add, "If any strangers like to come and see us, they are welcome to stay; and if any friends of yours, Mr. Umbra, happen to come this way, I shall be glad to show them proper attention." Careful not to offend on this head the nomenclature of the town, I have always been on the best possible terms with Mrs. Benyon. Through her I speedily made the acquaintance of the whole community, male and female. If there was some slight disappointment experienced among the juniors of the latter sex at finding the new settler was beyond the age of a dancing partner, their seniors were not sorry to

add a whist-player the more to their set. The only person to be pitied was a young gentleman who had hitherto been regarded as *the* travelled man *par excellence*, having been once as far as Geneva. Of course, after my arrival he was nowhere.

Next in importance to Mrs. Benyon, but at a long interval, was Mrs. Richard Fitzhugh, related, as I need scarcely tell the well-informed reader, to that high and puissant prince, Charles Duke of Halifax, K.G. By this link all Chatterville felt itself to be closely connected with the aristocracy. It is true none of us had ever seen the Duke; but we knew all about him, his family, his place, his doings; and were, as it were, swayed by him without his own knowledge. We entertained for his Grace the same feelings of venera tion which a Japanese may be supposed to cherish for his Mikado. Mrs. Benyon was our Tycoon, and governed us visibly; but the supreme though invisible authority was the Mikado, Duke of Halifax, whose thoughts and doings were occasionally made known to us through that powerful Daimio, Mrs. Fitzhugh. What alarm, what regret, what commotion did it not excite in Chatterville, when it was announced in the papers that the Duke had had a bad fall hunting in Leicester shire! Mrs. Fitzhugh telegraphed twice a day to know

how the august patient was going on, and informed everybody that she could not allow her daughter Clara to attend some private theatricals while her poor cousin remained in a precarious state. I am happy to say his Grace got over his accident, and a loyal joy pervaded the whole community at Chatterville. The only melancholy part of the story is that it transpired afterwards that the Duke was wholly ignorant of the existence of Mrs. Fitzhugh; for one of the young Benyons takes his affidavit, that on being introduced to the Duke in London, and informing him of the great anxiety of Mrs. Fitzhugh on his behalf, his only response was, "Ah! yes; George Fitzhugh's wife. Is George quite well?" Now, as before stated, the Christian name of Mr. Fitzhugh of Chatterville was Richard, not George; but, according to Seymour Benyon, he entirely failed in instilling this fact into the ducal mind. I myself, however, am willing to believe that this is a figment on the part of that malicious imp.

In a small cottage covered with clematis lived Major and Mrs. De Vere. He was a gentlemanlike Major, and she was like a picture by Greuze stepped out of its frame. They had married for love, and I am afraid were not so rich as might be, but had everything comfortable, and Mrs. De Vere was always beautifully

dressed. She did the honours of her cottage like a queen, as Marie Antoinette might have received her guests at her dairy at Trianon. It is needless to say how much we all admired Mrs. De Vere; I thought her angelic. One day, sitting in her drawing-room, I took up an album, and found it full of caricatures by her hand; a talent which I was not previously aware she possessed. All our friends were there; even Mrs. Benyon was not spared. I turned them over, exclaiming, "Capital! capital!" as I recognised each successive face; when suddenly I came on the most grotesque figure I ever beheld. I asked who it was, when Mrs. De Vere went into a peal of laughter, and said it was a most absurd original she had met the year before at Harrogate. However, she hastily took away the book. I have my suspicions. O Lucy, Lucy De Vere! can it be with those dove-like eyes there lurked in you a serpent's guile? Could you have intended to quiz Umbra?

The Benyons, Fitzhughs, and De Veres constituted the oligarchy of Chatterville, and with them I lived in friendly relations. We were the salt of the earth,-- *la crême de la crême;* the blue blood, the inner circle, tabooed, as it were, which outsiders regarded tremblingly, and being permitted to approach, entered gratefully. Of the exoteric world, the most materially important

person in the place was the banker, the Podesta I called him; for he regulated all municipal affairs, was a borough magistrate, appointed churchwardens, levied parish-rates, and all such concerns. He was a worthy man, and did not abuse his vast powers.

There was also an old lady, regarded as the aboriginal inhabitant of the place. She dwelt in an ancient house, under the shade of paternal oaks, and there had dwelt long long before Chatterville was even an embryo watering-place. She may be said to have represented the Saturnian age. Some wags reported that her great-uncle had been a distinguished Druid, a friend of Caractacus, and it is difficult to say to what epoch her own memory did not revert. I always thought the venerable lady might have been advantageously bound in morocco and put on the shelf of our public library as a volume of the county history. She had two sons, who sometimes came to see her, but they seldom remained long at Chatterville. As she was wont to say, young men naturally preferred London, but she was afraid it was a sadly dissipated place, abounding with temptations. One of these interesting youths thus imperilled was a gouty general, who used to growl from morning to night at the Senior United Service Club, Pall Mall, and the other had retired on a hand-

some pension, after thirty-five years' servitude in a public office.

There was also a Miss Roberts, a great gossip and cringing toady. It was the fashion to call her good-natured, solely, I imagine, because in addition to the above-named qualities she was undeniably very foolish. All I know is that if any mischief was made in Chatterville, it was sure to be traced sooner or later to this abominable woman. Who produced a temporary coolness between me and the Podesta by reporting that I was the author of a stinging epigram that appeared in the *Chatterville Scourge* on the locking up of the parish pump?—who but Miss Roberts? Who caused an estrangement between me and Mrs. Stubbs, the widow of an Indian cavalry officer, by circulating a rumour that I was seeking her hand in marriage?—again I say Miss Roberts. Mrs. Stubbs, with whom I had been previously on good terms, was a correct lady, but had a loud voice and a small income, two things which I dislike. A voice soft and low is, we all know, an excellent thing in woman (this it was that mainly caused Mrs. Benyon's rule to be unchallenged, namely, that she always promulgated her edicts in a gentle voice). Miss Roberts verily was the snake in our terrestrial paradise in the west of England.

To go through a list of all the residents would be as tedious as Homer's catalogue of ships. Many persons had originally settled, attracted by the comparative cheapness of the place, and as with the growth of the town the cost of living had increased, they often found compensation in letting their houses. At the annual time of letting there was a grand emulation among the householders, congratulations were showered on those who had done well, and if envy prevailed in any quarter, in our refined circle it was not permitted to show itself openly.

Very few military came to Chatterville, it was out of the way of flying dragoons and marching ensigns. Occasionally an officer would visit a friend, and advantage was generally taken of such an event by the young ladies to improvise a ball, but the visits of these angelic strangers were few and far between.

On the other hand, the clergy abounded. Great was the company of preachers. We had them of all hues and shades: the high, the low, the broad, the slow. There was the severe clergyman, who fulmined at us from the pulpit; the comfortable clergyman, who was a thought too fond of his dinner, but a capital mimic, and to whom his friends directed as "the Rather Reverend;" the sentimental clergyman, who said of

himself "his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart" (he wrote poetry, and inscribed some verses in Miss Benyon's album, to the Rose of Chatterville; but Georgiana Benyon was a very proud young lady, and snubbed him); and there was the musical clergyman, who always went to town to attend the sacred concerts at Westminster, and never missed the oratorios in the cathedral towns in the autumn. They were all praiseworthy men in their vocation, were moral and charitable, and I conscientiously believe not one of them would have wished to burn, put to death, mutilate, or otherwise torture a single one of his fellow-creatures, unless, indeed, they had chanced to differ on some theological point, in which case they might have deemed it a matter of professional duty.

CHAPTER II.

It was in this choice society that I had lived many years, up to the summer of 1863. It is written, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I fear I did not quite fulfil the commandment; but I did not covet anything which was his.

I had taken root like a moss or lichen, and there I might have remained without stirring until now, but for a dream. I am not superstitious, so I have no doubt the dream was caused by my looking over an old note-book, and putting together some reminiscences of the tour I had made in Iceland many years ago.

I had been dining with our Podesta, who gave us a very good repast; but I own I never feel quite at ease with my banker. When I enter his office I experience sensations akin to those I endure in the dentist's waiting-room; and when I meet him, bland and courteous, in society, I am affected as a Roman Catholic who had committed murder and remained undetected, might

be supposed to be impressed, on coming across his Father Confessor at a private party. Methinks there is one in the company who knows my secret. What avails it, O Umbra! that you tell the most witty tale or the most sparkling anecdote, when there is one present who knows exactly the state of your balance, —how many or how few pounds, shillings, and pence, are at your command? Beneath the gaze of my banker my spirit quails, as did that of Anthony before Augustus Cæsar. However, as on this occasion I had not overdrawn, I had no real reason to be afraid. The dinner was given more especially in honour of Sir Leonard Prose, our county Member, who had come to pay a flying visit to this corner of his constituency. I do not know what his politics are; but as he gave me a lift in his brougham away from dinner, I wish to speak highly of him. A host of clergy had been asked to meet him, and the conversation turned almost exclusively on education. What had not that gentleman, the Right Hon. Robert Lowe, to answer for? I do not allude to the merits or demerits of his scheme, about which I know nothing, and care, if possible, less; but to the quantity of talk let loose by him; the flood of statistics that threatened to submerge all the tea-tables in Chatterville. Even Mildred—the second Miss Benyon--ordinarily a

quiet inoffensive girl, but interested in a parish school, used to trot about with a copy of the Revised Code under her arm, and in the market-place would discourse, Cassandra-like, expressing her surprise that lightning from heaven did not singe the head of the Right Hon. Robert.

This evening, the severe clergyman, whom I strongly suspect of wishing to show off before Sir Leonard, would interrupt me eating a lobster patty, by asking me point-blank my opinion across the table on the proper method of educating the masses. I made a vague reply, which I thought quite safe, when he cut me short by saying—

"Enough, sir; I see you are a secularist."

I never was so shut up in all my life; for I candidly confess I had not the least idea what a secularist might be; but it would never have done for me to betray my ignorance, so I held my tongue.

After dinner, I took aside the Doctor, a very shrewd old gentleman, and said to him carelessly—

"Pray, Doctor, how would you exactly define a secularist,—is he an infidel or atheist?" for I suspected something bad, *omne ignotum pro horribili.*

"A secularist," answered the Doctor, "may be an infidel or an atheist; but he is not necessarily one."

"No doubt," replied I, somewhat irritated; "a

murderer may be a doctor; but he is not necessarily one."

"A secularist also," retorted the other composedly, "may be a dunce; but he is not necessarily one."

"*Parbleu! ce katakoua de Chatterville se moque de moi,*" was my reflection, when my host came up and put me down to whist; while at the same time was arranged a musical entertainment, the principal performers being the harmonious curate, and one of the bank-clerks, who bellowed like a bull of Basan.

"I suppose you have heard all the great singers in town?" remarked to me my partner.

"Of course I have," said I. "Grisi, Mario, Jenny Lind, Rubini." Here I pulled up sharp, remembering it would not do to let out my age too far.

"Is there anything you particularly prefer?" asked the mild curate civilly.

"'*Mi manca, la voce,*' would be admirably suited to your organ, Mr. Rubric," said I; but this keen stroke was utterly lost on him; and the obliging curate chirped away complacently. Then the banker's clerk roared. Ye gods, how he did roar! I thought he would never stop. "I must put an end to this," thought I; so a footman approaching with refreshments, I hailed him. "Please present the compliments of the whist-table to

Mr. Bullion, and say they would be much obliged if he would repeat the hundred and thirty-seventh stanza of his song." I thought poor Bullion would be crushed with such a message; but the honest fellow was too obtuse; he was only flattered. "With pleasure," said he. "It is the twenty-seventh stanza I suppose they mean;" and he re-roared the obnoxious stanza with redoubled energy. *Que faire?* How deal with such a case-hardened tribe, utterly impervious to the shafts of satire?

As I was about to make my escape I was intercepted by Mrs. Solan Gannet, a stout old lady, like a fillet of veal on castors, who was blessed with three rather pretty daughters.

"O my dear Mr. Umbra," said she, "I do so want to speak to you; come and sit down on the sofa. You never come to see us now. Why not? My girls are quite unhappy about it; but I tell them you are too much engaged with your books to care for the society of young creatures like them."

I murmured something about my strong regard for the Miss Gannets.

"Well, you are a prime favourite with them, I can assure you. Only the other day Miss Roberts observed that she could not conceive why you gave yourself such airs, for you were a nobody, said she, half book-

worm, and half misanthrope; and my Amabella fired up in your defence, and gave it her. She said you were a very clever, sensible person, for you had promised to give her a pic-nic in St. Anne's Cave, and let her ask the company."

I was rather touched by the defence of me by Amabella, and particularly admired her powers of close logical reasoning; so I answered manfully—

"A pic-nic she shall have, Mrs. Gannet, whenever she will name the day. We will have pigeon pie, lobster-salad, and iced champagne."

"Well, that is very handsome of you, Mr. Umbra, and certainly dear Amabella was not mistaken in her estimate of you. But now it is about my youngest daughter, Rosa, I want to talk to you; she has a great favour to ask of you."

"What does little Rosa want?—a box of sugar-plums?"

"No; dear Rosa is quite grown-up now, and next week Mrs. Benyon is going to have a dance, and she has asked my two eldest girls, but not poor Rosa; now you are such a friend of Mrs. Benyon's, we know you could get Rosa asked if you please, and she will dance the first set with you, if you wish it, I am sure."

"Zounds, madam!" said I, at last fairly exasperated; "do I look like a dancing man? or do you take me for

a master of ceremonies at Chatterville, that I am to get young ladies invited to balls at other people's houses?"

"But think what a disappointment it will be to Rosa to remain at home all alone, while her sisters are dancing!"

"Well, I will tell you what I will do, I will lend her a book to read,—Zimmerman on the *Pleasures of Solitude.*"

"I do not think Rosa would care for that."

"But she should, it is a very philosophic work; and in philosophy the thoughtful inquirer finds the truest and most lasting pleasure. What noble testimony does Epictetus bear to this in the epigram which he made on himself, wherein he demonstrates that however adverse Nature and Fortune may show themselves, however sinister the outward aspect of affairs, yet to the true philosopher there still exist certain secret consolations, which the mere vulgar in all the plenitude of their prosperity can never hope to attain. Doubtless, Mrs. Gannet, you remember the passage—

> 'Behold me! Epictetus is my name,
> By birth a slave, in shape deformed and lame,
> And steeped in poverty am I; but heaven
> To me its best and choicest gifts has given.'"

"Sir," said Mrs. Gannet, bursting into tears, "though

we are not so well off as when my poor husband was alive, still we are not steeped in poverty like the black man you talk about, and it is very cruel to be thus insulted by one's friends."

"Good heavens, Mrs. Gannet, I never dreamed of insulting you! But excuse me, why do you call Epictetus a black? My dear madam, he was a Greek."

"I thought you said he was a slave, and that is, I suppose, the same thing. At all events, you said he was deformed and lame, and in that case, of course, he could not wish to go to a ball and dance; now dear Rosa is straight as an arrow, and she adores dancing, so I do hope you will be a true friend and oblige her."

"Cool," thought I, "uncommon cool;" but I felt I had made a sad mistake in quoting Epictetus as a precedent for Rosa Gannet, so I went next day and made a full confession to Mrs. Benyon, who was much amused at my attempts to teach philosophy to Mrs. Gannet, and said all her girls might come on the condition that I danced with them myself. So on the night of the ball, to the amusement of the whole room, I had to stand up and dance a quadrille with Rosa, released from which, she was made happy by spinning round the room the rest of the evening with a tall Irishman, who had somehow strayed to Chatterville.

CHAPTER III.

BUT to return to the dream of which I made mention. I thought that I was in a forest, and inhaled the sweet but pungent odour of the pines, and a torrent with delirious bounds leaped at my feet, and a wind arose, making rough minstrelsy among the pines, tossing them to and fro, and there was a sense of wild rejoicing; and it seemed to me as though I had escaped out of prison, and was free.

And I followed the track of the torrent till I came to a vast sea of ice. The wind was now mute, and silence, as of death, reigned around. An amphitheatre of mountains encompassed me, and afar off the highest peak rose in queenlike majesty, and glittered like a star.

And profound melancholy fell on my heart, and I would fain have sat down and wept, though I knew not why.

And now I espied two figures crossing the distant glaciers, and making for the place where I stood. At

last they reached it, and stopped before me. Their faces were muffled, but the taller shape held a huge hammer in his hand; and then methought I knew it was the god Thor, and that it was the mallet Mjolnir, which both the Frost and Mountain Giants knew to their cost when they saw it hurled against them in the air; for it had split many a skull of their father and kindred. Still the son of Odin unveiled not his face, but stood before me speechless. At last I mustered courage to address him:

"What seekest thou, O Thor, deposed god? What seekest thou of him who stood beside thy wasted shrine at Helgafell?"

Then the two figures unveiled their faces, and lo! behold Thor was Darwin, and the other was Digwell, pale and emaciated as I had seen him at Mossfell; but the countenance of Darwin was suffused with a noble indignation as he spake.

"Is it well of thee, O Umbra, having known us, to decline to a lower range, and to waste days that might be spent in toil and endurance in a provincial noodledom?—to dawdle among talking tabbies and caterwauling curates?" (It will be observed that the ghost of my poor friend preserved the awful energy of language habitual to him in his lifetime.) "Say," said the ap-

parition, giving a formidable twist to his hammer, "is this well of thee?"

And I gasped out, "It is not well."

Then turned I to Digwell, and said, "Is he still angry about the Sagas, as when he was crushed beneath the stone? or has he forgiven me? O Digwell! shall we never again feel our ponies bound like proud seas under us?—shall we ever ride again in peace, and take sweet counsel together?"

And the face of Digwell was mild and placid as that of a saint, as he answered—

"Dorten wirst du auch uns wieder finden
Wenn dein lieben unsern lieben gleicht,
Ist auch der Oheim frei von Zornes Sünden—
Und mich die Hungersnoth nicht mehr erreicht."

"Please translate for me, Digwell," said I, "for I am not strong in the Teutonic tongue."

With a smile of benevolent compassion for my ignorance, the shade translated—

"Yes, know, if thy affection equals ours,
In other regions we shall meet again;
My mighty uncle rage no more devours,
Nor feel I more the hunger's pinching pain."

As I mused on the oracle, Darwin said, "Umbra, we shall meet at Wildbad, if not at Philippi;" and he gave

me a tap on the head with his mallet, from the smart of which I awoke, and found myself in bed at Chatterville.

After this dream I became very restless and excited. I felt dissatisfied with my peaceful lot. I was now constantly taking down my Tennyson, and reading the noble poem of Ulysses, and comparing myself to that island potentate. It was true that I was not exactly an idle king, nor had I an aged wife or a son Telemachus, but in all else how close seemed the resemblance! I would pace up and down my room, repeating to myself—

> "I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
> Life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed
> Greatly, have suffered greatly; both with those
> That loved me, and alone."

Yes!—poor Darwin! poor Digwell! and poor Lodbrog! they did love me; and we did suffer greatly that last week we had no food; and then I continued—

> "On shore, and when
> Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
> Vext the dim sea;"

Hum! that is rather a poetic description of that uncommon dirty night off Peterhead: how does it go on?

"I am become a name,
For always roaming with a hungry heart;
Much have I seen and known; cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments."

How true of me! how very true! I did know all these. I did mingle with those who shape the destinies of mankind, and here I am the inmate of a country town. Confound their humdrum dinners, their musical parties, and sixpenny whist. This was sadly ungrateful of me, I own, for it was after all from the courtesy of my neighbours that I had derived the chief sources of amusement at Chatterville; but I was too excited to note my own injustice, as I continued my quotation—

"How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished; not to shine in use;
As though to breathe were life, life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains."

"Halloa!" thought I; "how about that?" Query. But the rest is on all-fours with my case; and I read on till I came to

"And vile it were
For some three suns to store, and hoard myself,
And this grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star."

"Yes," said I, putting down the volume, "I will be off; the die is cast. Chatterville, I leave thee;" and

full of this determination I sallied out and bought a Continental *Bradshaw*.

I was undecided where to go, but of course went to London first to look about me before starting, as a carrier-pigeon wheels two or three times round his abode before proceeding on his journey. I entered my Club, and the porter, I thought, looked at me suspiciously, and when my identity forced itself upon his mind, referred to the list of members to see if I had paid up my subscription. As I sat in the morning-room I overheard one young man say to another, in the detestable slang of the present day—

"I say, Charley, who is that old cove?"

To which was made reply—

"Do you suppose I know all the old fogeys in the club? Ask the grave-digger; he looks like one of his lot, buried and dug up again, I take it."

"*E finito!*" thought I, as I heard this coarse and cruel remark, "it is all over with me. I, Umbra, the once well-known and popular, the friend of the wise and witty, I am now called an old fogey!"

I saw the *Duke's Motto*, and admired Miss Terry. I went the round of the Exhibitions, but I saw no one whom I knew. I had looked forward to coming to town, and I found it duller than Chatterville.

One day the beautiful Princess of Wales passed me in her carriage, and, in return to my loyal salutation, made me a gracious bow. "Ah," thought I, "how little does that Royal Lady think that she bowed to the comrade of the great Darwin, the historian of her country's Scandinavian records!"

One fine morning I bought a *Times* newspaper, and going to Rotten Row, Hyde Park, sat on a chair and read it there—debates, foreign intelligence, and all; and then I spelled through the advertisements, the list of steamboats and clippers about to start for different parts of the world, but I could not make up my mind to take the plunge; then my eye was caught by "Tourists and Travellers,"—this, thought I, may be interesting—"exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, and heated particles of dust, will find Rowland's Kalydor a most refreshing preparation for the complexion, dispelling the cloud of languor and relaxation, allaying all heat and irritability,"—ha! ha! ha! I went into an incontrollable fit of laughter. I would have given twenty dollars to see M'Diarmid's face, if in Iceland, when every inch of room in our boxes was discussed as how far available, some of our party had suddenly produced a cosmetic; or poor Digwell's look if he asked for bread and had been handed a bottle of Rowland's

Kalydor; it would not have allayed their irritability —ha! ha! ha!

Having enjoyed this joke a little I read wofully on, finding nothing interesting.

"Housemaid (Thorough)!" I wonder what the deuce that means. 'Thorough' was the term applied to the wicked Earl of Strafford; now it comes down to a housemaid! What does it mean? I was cogitating on this, when a gruff voice exclaimed—

"Holloa, you, sir!" and under my nose was poked a curiously-carved bamboo cane, with the figure of a bald mandarin at the top. Considerably startled at this apparition, I looked up from my paper, glanced along the cane, and saw two gentlemen, one of whom was unknown to me; the other was Mr. X., somewhat grizzled, it is true, but still Mr. X.

"Goodness gracious! Mr. X.," said I; "how glad I am to see you!"

"Glad, are you? We will soon see about that. I beg your pardon, Count, but I must have some words with this gentleman."

"Let me not be in your way," said the individual addressed as Count; "*au revoir, mon cher X.* We meet at dinner at B. House. Ah, ha! let us hope it will not be like the dinner we were once to give in

America. You know our friend here and I," continued he to me, "had asked some acquaintance, and we had ordered dinner; terapin soup, you know, X., locust patties, alpaca cutlets, *fricassée* of parrots, and monkey as *pièce de résistance;* and we went out to take a stroll before dinner, when my legs did stagger; and 'Hum,' said I, 'what is this?' and 'Hum,' said you, 'if it were not that I never take wine in the middle of the day, I should say I was tipsy. I feel all sick; yes.' So when we went back you rub your eyes—and 'Where is it?' say you; and 'Where is it?' say I. The posada is gone! and then we find the inn, our dinner, the guests, and the waiters all swallowed up by one earthquake!"

"Powers eternal!" thought I to myself, "if I could only tell a story like that." And then looking up to the angry countenance of Mr. X., I said—

"I am really rejoiced to see you, X. Are you still in Parliament?"

"Never you mind about Parliament, sir. I have some serious business to settle with you. What do you mean by writing that infernal book?"

"Book! I have published no book."

"Do not equivocate, sir. You know well enough what I mean: that accursed stuff you dared to print this spring. I am mad with rage; and Digwell's

relatives mean to prosecute you for libel. 'Evil are the deeds of Loki truly,' as poor dear Darwin used to say."

"I don't think you ought to complain of the private publication, Mr. X. Your Sapphics were extremely admired."

"Were they admired?"

"They were indeed. Switchem, one of the masters at Eton, told me they were evidently written by a ripe scholar. Those were his words." (I hope to be forgiven for this groundless but harmless falsehood.)

"Switchem is a man of taste and judgment, beyond dispute," returned Mr. X., somewhat mollified; "still I wish you were at the devil, Umbra; I do indeed. What you said about the others did not so much signify; but what could induce you to drag in my name, and all that rigmarole about Leonora? The mischief you have done is incalculable. Conceive my feelings when I met the other day Lady Clumsy, who is become a widow."

"Why, what became of Sir Charles?"

"Killed by truffles, sir. He must needs go to Baden, and stopping at Strasburg, the pie did not agree with the *dura ilia* of Yorkshire. This comes of the fatal facility of modern travel. He might have flourished to

a green old age in the North Riding. But come, let us take a turn."

As we proceeded up the the Row, Mr. X. recognised many acquaintances among equestrians and loungers on foot, and pointed out to me the chief literary and other notabilities of the London world: Bosworth, who under the name of Siccus wrote the celebrated letter to the *Times* on the adulteration of beer; old Mr. Joseph Muller, who furnishes jocose articles for the *Weekly Sneer;* Colonel Percy Hopkins, who leads the cotillon at all the fashionable balls; the Chancellor of the Exchequer; Mr. Wheatly, who gives champagne luncheons at Ascot (X. made a most respectful obeisance to this gentleman); and the Vice-President of the Royal Geographical Society, walking with the brothers Seckendorf, who had lived for two years in Oriental Siberia on camels' dung.

I mused on the various paths by which men achieve fame.

"Halloa!" said X., suddenly stopping; "look there! By Zeus, look there!"

I looked, and saw a yellow chariot drawn by four greys; the postilions in red jackets with white favours; evidently a wedding turn-out; but I saw nothing particular to excite surprise.

"Why, it is the Whip," said X. "There he goes!

Just married. God bless him. Never shall I forget our discourse as we rode down after the ascent of the Mountain."

"What mountain?"

"Sir, in Mexico THE Marquis always means Hernan Cortez, Marquis of the Valley; and THE Mountain always means—." Here X. pronounced a word, which seemed to me to resemble the prolonged discharge of a platoon of musketry. "As yonder Benedict and I rode down through woods blazing with the scarlet salvia, we disputed the whole way about the currency. By the by, Umbra, are you sound on that question?"

"What question?"

"Our monetary laws. Are you orthodox or heterodox?"

"Which is which?"

"Do not prevaricate, sir. Are you in favour of an unrestricted issue, or are you not?"

"My banker will not let me overdraw," said I timidly; when X. interrupted, "None of your levity, sir. Do you understand the first principles of demand and supply?"

"I do."

"Explain them."

"I cannot."

"Why, Umbra, you are a fool; a positive fool Where have you been living all this time?"

"In the west."

"I thought as much. You had better go back, Bœotian. What are you doing in town? Everybody is leaving town. There is the Whip just gone; I shall go too."

"Where are you going to?"

"I shall go to the Orkneys or the Tyrol."

"Oh! let me come with you, Mr. X."

"You, Umbra! That is impossible. Remember your book."

"O let me come! If you only knew how tired I am of Chatterville, and how I hate Miss Roberts. O Mr. X.! you and I are old—."

"Umbra! are you mad? What the devil do you mean?"

"I did not mean you precisely. I was thinking of the address of Ulysses to his mariners—

> 'Death closes all! but something ere the end,
> Some work of noble note may yet be done,
> Not unbecoming men who strove with Trolls.'"

At this happy transmutation of trolls for gods, having reference to the famous ascent he had made of Eyrik's Jokul, Mr. X. could not forbear a smile.

"Why, Umbra, if I were sure you would not publish anything I dislike."

"I swear," said I.

"By what will you swear?"

"I will swear on your Faroë knife, as Hamlet made Marcellus swear on his sword."

"Well, if you will take that inviolable oath, you may come."

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGH pleased at the prospect of again travelling with an ancient comrade, I am bound to state that I thought Mr. X.'s manner had grown very imperious. Why did he rate me about his monetary laws? I had not had such language addressed to me for many years. No one at Chatterville, not even Miss Roberts, had dared to call me a fool to my face. However, I soon after received a note from him, saying he would meet me on a stated morning on board the Antwerp steamer, and there at the time appointed I found myself among a confused stock of live-lumber: dyspeptic patients bound for German spas, a Brussels ladies' boarding-school, shopkeepers relieved from the fatigues of the season, University students, and barristers escaping for the long vacation. I smelt the indescribable smell of a steamer permeate the whole atmosphere, and I felt by instinct that we should have tepid boiled legs of mutton for dinner.

At the last moment arrived X., with a small portmanteau and a knapsack, and wearing an old blue pea-coat, in which I would not have appeared at a bull-bait, if such fashionable amusements were still in vogue.

"Let us go and smoke a cigar in the fore part of the vessel, Umbra," said he; "we shall get out of the crowd."

I suppose X. saw me eyeing his veteran coat, for presently he said, "There is nothing so vulgar as going over-dressed, I always wear out my old clothes abroad; now in this coat no one would mistake me for a *nouveau-riche*."

"That I can safely swear to," said I.

Just as X. was hugging himself on the air of distinction which he flattered himself must make itself apparent through his dingy habiliments, an individual adorned in superfine attire—I think I see him now; he wore a green coat, a scarlet waistcoat with mother-of-pearl buttons, a sky-blue neckcloth with a silver Scotch brooch in it, mauve trousers, pink socks, and French-polished shoes: this individual hailed X. with—

"Well, governor, how are you?"

X. seemed rather astonished at being saluted with this title of authority, but replied that he was pretty well.

"A traveller, I suppose?"

"Yes," said X.; "I am a traveller."

"Hard or soft?" to which there was no reply. "Come, you must be one or the other."

"Then," said X., "I am not soft, I can tell you."

"Ever been at sea before?"

X. had frequently been between Southampton and Cowes.

"And pray, what house do you belong to?"

On this question being twice repeated, X. said he belonged to the Lower House.

"Ha! ha! very good; lower house in the hardware line; no great shakes, governor. I am soft myself; go in for silks; but I am not proud, bless you; shall be happy to notice you, and be of use to you, as you have never been abroad before. I suppose you are not great in the parley-voo business." But here a whobble at the Nore compelled the querist to retire, and relieved us of his society.

"What a very singular man, Umbra," said X., after two or three puffs of his cigar; "I wonder what he took us for."

"I don't know what he took us for, Mr. X.; but I know what he took you for: he thought you were a bagman."

X. rather winced, and I thought he would explode;

but it is not so easy to get a rise out of him, unless you attack him on currency, and he answered very calmly,—

"Well, Umbra, well; in a country like ours there is no interest greater than the commercial interest. If he had remained we might have got some useful information out of him. Now what do you suppose is the annual increase of tonnage entering the port of London?"

"I do not know, X., and I do not care."

"Pardon me, Umbra, you may not know, very probable, but you must care; it is a question that affects the vital interests of your country."

"But I do not care. I am not a hypocrite; and I do not care one straw."

"Why, suppose you were to be examined before a Parliamentary Committee?"

"I should refuse to answer."

"You would refuse to answer, sir, why, you would be—"

But here rung the dinner-bell, and we walked leisurely aft. My forebodings had not deceived me: there was the leg of mutton.

Arrived at Antwerp, Mr. X. informed me that British tourists were geese, and hurried through the most in-

teresting country by rail, without seeing anything. He affected a great enthusiasm for the fine arts, and paraded me through the Gallery at Antwerp, and went to Bruges to admire Hans Memling; and at Ghent pretended to be almost overcome by Van Eyck's picture of the Lamb. Query, if he is an impostor? At Aix-la-Chapelle, X. said he must stop to visit an interesting Jew of his acquaintance. As we stepped out on the platform we met a cheerful-looking gentleman and a very handsome lady, between whom and X. a cordial greeting took place. X. put the lady in a carriage, and then returned to assist his friend in clearing the luggage, of which he had an inordinate quantity; and now I discovered this unassuming gentleman to be an official of weight in Her Majesty's Government, for lo! among his luggage was a mighty red box, impressed with the Royal Arms, and held sacred by the messengers of Whitehall. And on this hallowed repository, even as the hawk pounces on the pigeon, so pounced the Prussian Douanier. Ah, Lion! what did it avail that you clenched your gilded paws like a boxer's fists? Ah, Unicorn! what booted it that you raised defiant your rampant horn? Nought cared the blue-clad Prussian for these emblems of British majesty. The box was opened, and displayed reams of official paper, envelopes,

and red tape. Red tape, envelopes, and paper were weighed one by one in the scales. The dismayed secretary watched the unwonted operation like a man in a dream, while X. looked on with a saturnine smile; and after a quarter of an hour's delay, and much consulting of the tariff, the German Zollverein was enriched by the sum of nine silver groschen.

X. and the secretary were after this in close converse, I know not what about. "I think it must be all right, X." said the latter, "it must surely be all right; but I expect a telegram; would you inquire?"

X. accordingly stepped to the telegraph office, and found a telegram had arrived. On reading the contents he grew quite red in the face. "Cocktail, by ——; not even a fight," said he, and handed the paper to his friend. The secretary glanced at it, gave a loud yell, and running full speed down the steep incline which leads from the railway station to the town of Aix, he plunged into a sulphur bath, where he was heard to lie groaning for three consecutive hours.

I was never able to wring from X. the secret of what this mysterious telegram contained.

CHAPTER V.

"Now we go up, now we go down," that seems the only epitome of our travels which I am allowed to record. Many were the mountains we clomb; many were the lakes we visited; and though neither of us was as young as formerly, we did a fair amount of walking in Switzerland, the Salzkammergut, and Tyrol.

We had been taking walks about the Dachstein, and were making for Golling. It was, if I mistake not, a little beyond Abtenau that we arrived at the top of the pass which commanded a view over great part of the Noric Alps, whose innumerable peaks surged in the clear air.

"Let us halt," said X., who was rather tired, for the day was hot, and in the shade of a pine we sat down on the grass, and produced our store of refreshment, hard-boiled eggs and a bottle of cold tea—fare not despised by the experienced pedestrian.

"Ah! this is pleasant," said X., as he gazed lazily on the blue sky through the interstices of the pine branches;

"here have we no cares to vex us; no troubles to make us fret. How well can I sympathize with the chivalrous Don, as he sat beneath the cork-trees and pronounced that noble speech on the age of gold: '*Dichosa edad,*' when those who lived in it '*ignoraban estas dos palabras de tuyo y mio.*' Very queer currency in those days."

"Never mind their currency; but is not this a splendid view? It rather reminds me of that we had above Mossfell."

"I can still admire a fine view, Umbra; perhaps the finest I ever had, was from the mountains above Sicyon, coming from Nemea."

"Why, I have been there, X."

"You, Umbra! Were you not rather out of your element in *die Götter Griechenland?*"

"Not at all. I admired Greece exceedingly, and by no means agree with our friend K., who declares it to be an audacious swindle. It was very late, near sunset, when we came to the top of the hill above Sicyon. Behind me, glowing in the golden light, was the whole Peloponnesus, with its thymy mountains; at my feet was the tall Acropolis of Corinth, reduced in size to a small molehill; to the right were Megara, and Athens, and Ægina, visible (as mentioned in the letter of Servius Sulpicius, quoted by Mr. Shandy to

Uncle Toby); while stretched out before me was the whole Gulf of Lepanto, with Helicon, and white Parnassus, and the sunken glen of Delphi opposite. It was a scene which made a deep impression on me, and which I can never forget."

"Why, Umbra, I had no idea you had so much romance in your composition. I thought you were only a Sancho Panza. Did you go to Delphi?"

"I did; and made a salad out of the water-cresses that grew in the Castalian spring."

"That accounts for your enthusiasm. Those were your sallet-days, when you were green. So you have stood, then, by the Bath of the Pythoness? What said the Oracle?"

"You encourage me, X., to ask your advice. Do you think I should have any chance of success if I published, instead of privately printing our travels? At Chatterville, they think highly of my literary taste."

"*Dans le royaume des aveugles le borgne est roi.*"

"They are not blind at Chatterville, I can assure you; I almost wish some of them were. Miss Roberts is lynx-eyed for her neighbours' faults."

"But what would you publish, Umbra?"

"Why, here," said I, producing a note-book, "here are my impressions of Nüremburg. It was like read-

ing a chapter of Froissart going into that old town, with its mediæval towers and drawbridge."

"Longfellow has done Nüremburg. Go on."

"I thought of writing of this country and the Bavarian Highlands. Shall I give an account of Thekla—not Schiller's Thekla, daughter of the Duke of Friedland—but the young 'frau' you admired at Tegernsee?"

"No; Baroness Tautphœus has done the Bavarian Highlands in *Quits* and *The Initials*. You cannot improve on her. As for Switzerland, I defy Lucifer himself, and twenty thousand (printing) devils, to write anything more about it which any one can wish to be read. About had the last touch at it in his admirable *Trente et Quarante*. Besides, to be frank with you, Umbra, I doubt if you have the capacities of an author. You are not a bad fellow, but then you have an intolerable vanity—"

"*Quis tulerit Gracchos?*" I murmured.

"No imagination, except for purposes of misrepresentation. Deficient judgment. And your attempts at humour are playful as the gambolings of a hippopotamus. You are not offended at my candour?"

"Save me! O save me from the candid friend!" was on my tongue; but I suppressed it, and thanked X. for his friendly advice.

"And yet confess, my poor Umbra, that you feel towards me somewhat of the Archbishop of Granada's sentiments, when he wished Gil Blas '*surtout un peu de meilleur goût.*'"

I owned the soft impeachment.

"It is strange, very strange," continued X. reflectively, as though confuting some monstrous paradox, "how people dislike to be told their faults; why I, even I, who possess the philosophic temperament more than most men, cannot promise that I shall be wholly insensible to the critic's scalpel, when I put forth my great work."

"Do you intend to publish, X.?"

"I do, sir."

"On what subject, pray?"

"Can you not guess?"

"History."

"No; all lies, as Sir Robert Walpole said."

"Your travels?"

"Bosh."

"A romance or an epic?"

"Papæ! No, sir; I shall soon produce a book which must edify and enlighten all mankind. I shall trace the laws of currency from the earliest times, when men subsisted on the system of barter, until the present year."

"I shudder at the thought."

"Now, Umbra, clear your mind from cant. Let us revert to first principles. What did you pay for the coat on your back?"

"I have not paid for it."

"Very likely; I shall treat of credit in my fourth volume; but how do you mean to pay for it?"

"By a cheque on my banker."

"And what will your banker do?"

"Honour it, I hope."

"How?"

"By paying the tailor his money."

"Now we come to the point. What *is* money? If you were an ignorant savage you would pay for it in cowries."

"But I am not an ignorant savage."

"I am not so sure of that, Umbra; but, waiving the point, what do you call money? Bank notes?—that is paper which represents gold. And what is gold?—the 'yellow slave,' as poor dear Timon calls it, or dross, as Robinson Crusoe appropriately termed it, when he contemplated a handful of it in his desert island. When I was at Regla, I saw a large dirty gray pond, in which some mules were wading up to their bellies,—appropriate emblems, it seemed to me, of those

who are knee-deep in riches, but enjoy not the same, or even understand the use of it: for this dirt, sir, this miry slush, from which I stood carefully aside lest it should dirty my boots,—this was silver undergoing the process of being separated from the ore; and taken thence, it was cast into bars of metal, again to be coined into dollars. And for this, thought I, as I surveyed the filthy quagmire of wealth; it is for this men toil through their weary lives; this sets armies and fleets in motion, and hires warriors to expose their frames to death and mutilation; for this sailors harpoon whales in icy seas, and bring palm-oil from the coast of Guinea; for this opera-singers strain their throats, and *danseuses* execute pirouettes; for this lawyers declaim, and authors sell the work of their brains; for this sculptors carve Carrara marble, and painters adorn their canvas with living colours; for this the iron horse speeds along the railroad, and Hansom cabmen drive furiously through the streets of London."

"Good gracious! X., I never suspected you of so much eloquence before."

"You see, Umbra, the subject interests me; but now we come to the point: what does this gold and silver represent?"

"First tell me where was this wonderful Regla?"

"Regla is by nature the most romantic spot in the world. You would never surmise it to be the head-quarters of money-making. It is a valley in Mexico, bastioned by tall basaltic columns. At the end is a waterfall; and over the fall nodded two palm-trees. A friend has lately sent me a photograph of it, which I will show you when we go home."

"I have always wished to hear of your travels in Mexico, and your ascent of the great mountain."

"I would rather discuss to you the currency. Now, you see, we start from first principles."

"My head begins to ache, X.; I would much rather you talked to me of your mountain."

"You are foolish; you may meet many who have been up mountains; but you will scarcely find such another lucid exponent of —. However, if you insist, I will first fill a pipe, and then I will begin."

"I had returned to the city of Mexico after a fortnight's absence, in which I had visited the Cave of Cacahumahamilpa."

"How much?"

"Be quiet, Umbra. I really cannot repeat that name again; suffice it to say, that the cave is as large as the city of Paris, and its wonders surpass those of

Aladdin's palace. I had returned, I say, to the city of Mexico, where, by the way, I found a pronunciamento going on. It was to make the President Lord High Admiral. I need not inform you that the word *Admiral* has nothing necessarily to do with ships, being derived from the Saracen word *Emir*. I never found out what particular good the President, who was deposed soon after, derived from this Moorish title; but at all events the revolution was a bloodless one; it seemed to me to consist of six very small boys carrying six very large sugar-canes, and shouting through the streets their praises of the new Lord High.

"I went to the Legation, where I was much at home. How we used to cut up our friends in England when in the Calle Real!"

"You did?"

"Root and branch; we spared neither age nor sex. It was touching that we did not forget them at 6000 miles' distance. A fine aroma of sarcasm pervaded the Minister's room, good fellow though he was. Going there, I found that Grant and the Whip, whom I showed you driving from St. George's, had arrived at Mexico, and we met with much rejoicing. I rode out with him to see Montezuma's cypresses, so called, though they do not at all resemble the Oriental cypress. Compared

with these magnificent trees, the tallest oak in Europe is but a shrub; their clear stems are forty feet in circumference, and they are festooned with that gray parasite, the hanging creeper, named Spanish Moss. These trees have received the name of the Mexican Emperor, who had a palace at this place, Chapultepec; but the trees themselves must have been old centuries before he came, for the Aztec was but a short-lived dynasty. Like the Pyramids of Egypt, with which they are haply coeval, they have seen dominions flourish and fade beneath their shadow, and still themselves survive in solemn grandeur. We wandered through the hoar grove, not unimpressed by the genius of the spot, when the Whip gazed long and wistfully at the two snowy mountains which tower pre-eminent over minor hills that girdle the broad valley of Mexico: the steep Sugar-Loaf Volcano and the extended ridge *Ictaziculhl*, the White Lady, that is, in the Indian tongue; for it bears close resemblance to a recumbent figure, or corpse stretched out for burial,—even the features of the face can be made out with small stretch of the fancy. Between these mountains ran the old and straighter road to the city of Mexico, by which marched Cortez from Cholula, and thence obtained he his first sight of the famed city—the Venice of the West—reposing on its numerous islets, intersected

by boat-thronged canals, gay and fantastic with its minarets, its pavilions, and floating gardens,—far different from the stately but sombre town which now usurps its place; for the lake itself is dried up, and of the Indian capital not one trace remains. The Whip gazed long and wistfully at the icy cone of the volcano. 'Is it to be done?' said he. 'Cortez,' replied I, 'sent up Diego de Ordòz, one of his cavaliers, to obtain sulphur for the manufacture of gunpowder. He failed the first attempt, but succeeded a second, and the Emperor Charles v. gave Ordòz a burning mountain for his crest.' 'That which a Spaniard did an Englishman should do,' said the Whip sententiously. 'Ay! and a Scotchman,' said Grant. 'It shall be done!' said the Whip. He was a man of few words, but of much resolution. We rode home by another route, pausing at the tree where Cortez rested to collect his stragglers the night of his retreat—the *triste noche*—and was then rejoined by Alvarado, the hero of the leap; and on our return to the town we at once commenced preparations for the ascent of the Volcano."

CHAPTER VI.

"A DAY or two afterwards we started, and rode out along the causeway in great spirits."

"Is the country very beautiful, X.?"

"Umbra, you will understand that in Mexico, there are four distinct tracts, quite different from one another in climate and character. First you have the *tierra caliente*, the hot sandy district along the coast, where foul miasma rises from lagoons and marshes, and fever is rife. There saw I again the prickly acacia, with its little yellow tufts; the tree 'whence drops the medicinal gum,' our old acquaintance in the wilderness of Sinai; and sometimes the bushes would be covered with gaudy convolvuluses, glaring bright like the side-scenes of the opera, so that one almost expected to see short petticoated ladies come tripping down the parterre; but they did not. The region is a desert; and we scarce saw a human being. Secondly comes the *tierra templada*, where the uplands commence—a land of dews and showers; for

the vapours floating from the sea, and striking against snowy hills beyond, here dissolve into rain, and the atmosphere resembles that of a warm bath-room. Hence the marvellous vegetation which makes the story of Jack's bean-stalk appear scarcely fabulous. As I wound up the Pass of Chicuite, for the first, and perhaps the only time in my life, did I realize the gorgeous, the prodigal luxuriance which I had so often read of as characteristic of tropical scenery. It was winter, but the verdure of the forest is here perennial; and palm and cocoa, ceiba and cotton trees, and many whose names I know not, clustered together in a matted jungle so thick, the eye failed to pierce its shade. Enormous creepers threw their tendrils from branch to branch; great ferns, themselves like trees, unfurled their fan-like leaves; from the mossy boughs were pendent hundred orchids of many hues -blue, white, lilac—such as are shown as rarities in English hot-houses, the delicate children of the woods; flowers of every description, some which I scarce know to term leaf or flower, but which gleamed through the green foliage like crimson stars."

"Why, X., you are waxing poetical; who would have thought it!"

"I suppose I am talking tall; but the fact is, Umbra,

this *tierra templada* is a very wonderful place. What I have been telling you of is the wilderness; but when you come to a clearing, you will see an Indian village nestling under gigantic bananas. The little huts beneath the great plants look like children's toys. Talk of gardens! talk of fruits!—why, Umbra, I scarcely expect you to believe me, but I saw once two million oranges lying on the ground, because there were no hands to pick them up."

I gave a long whistle! "Why, that would supply Covent Garden for a great part of the season. Won't you take off a few thousands from your two million, X.?"

"Not a single one; on the contrary, there were also four hundred thousand lemons,—four hundred or thereabouts, I am not so sure of the exact number—besides chirramoyas."

"What are they?"

"You have a pleasure to come if you have not tasted one. Well, where was I? Going up the Pass of Chicuite. Over our heads flew parrots of rich plumage, and humming-birds; the latter, however, are so small that as they dart by you do not see their prismatic colours. By the way, a curious thing happened to me once. I had been riding all night, and being very

tired, fastened my horse by his lasso to a tree, and lay down to have a short snooze. I was awoke by the flap of a black rustling object, and looking up, saw that it was a sopilote, or black vulture, that had brushed me with his wing. I saw he rejoined, at a short distance, twelve others, who were all squatting in a circle, motionless. I counted them; as I said, they were thirteen. Now, that is the usual number of the Cabinet; it was evident they had been holding a council over me, and sent one of their body to reconnoitre, and make a report concerning my sanitary condition."

"I suppose it was a sad disappointment finding you alive?"

"Brutes! Now, Umbra, I have got you out of the *tierra templada;* for you will be pleased to suppose that you rise by another excessively steep ascent, and find yourself in the *tierra fria*, or cold country; cold by comparison only. You see no more traces of dense vegetation, but wide fields of excellent corn land; the fences composed of the aloe, both the Maguay, commonly called the Mexican aloe, which now grows all over Spain and Sicily, to which it is not really indigenous, and the Organ aloe, which feeds the cochineal. Generally, along the road are avenues of pepper-trees,

with their scarlet pods. The city of Mexico itself is 7500 feet above the sea; the climate varies hour by hour. In the middle of the day the heat is intense, and in the morning I have myself broken icicles off the walls. So that Moore's verse,—

> 'He knew no more of fear than one who dwells
> Beneath the tropics, knows of icicles;'

which last line some one, to his great alarm, changed to—

> 'In Scottish Highlands knows of knee-buckles.'

Physically speaking, you see, his verse is incorrect.

"Besides these three districts severally named, is the mountain country, like Switzerland, clothed in pine woods, and refreshed by cold rivulets and waterfalls. Higher of course than all are the peaks of eternal snow.

"Now Umbra, you know all about Mexico. I am getting rather tired, and shall leave off."

"Why, it is I who ought to be tired, X.; but go on."

"Well, we rode by the town and church of Guadaloupe, where the Virgin once appeared and made a present of her portrait to a shepherd boy. I have a copy of it at home. Once a year the Indians meet from all parts of the country to celebrate the event. I was there. They had men dressed like our morris-

dancers, and they danced away in the church,—regular high-jinks, I assure you."

"Is not that a singular religious ceremony?"

"Formerly we acted plays in Europe. Perhaps the life of a nation resembles the life of a man: what is good and suitable for the child befits not the grown-up man. I do not like to argue about creeds," continued X., somewhat sadly, "but I doubt if a purer religion would suit the Indians. Even now, it is said they are with difficulty weaned by their priests from worshipping their idols. No faith could be more horrible than the ancient one of their race, for it is believed sixty thousand human sacrifices took place in the year. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.* Now they believe in Christianity, however it may be overlaid with superstition.

"Before night we reached a hacienda, to which we carried letters of introduction, where we were most hospitably received.

"The following day our kind host bade us farewell, and told us he would wait dinner for us next evening till ten, by which time, if we did not return, he should suppose us lost. I am happy to say that we kept tryst, for we rode next night into the hacienda of San Rafael as the clock in the chapel tower struck ten.

"But I anticipate. We were now close under the mountains. We stopped at noon at the village of Jamaica, where high on a hill stands a church, to which leads an avenue of the tallest cypresses. From the summit the eye wanders over the whole valley of Mexico; which is rather a basin than what we term a valley; for its width is forty miles. All around the church were pictures of robberies and murders, and frequently the subsequent execution of the criminals, placed there *pour encourager les autres.*"

"It is a great place for robberies, is it not?"

"They do little else, except gamble; gamble first and rob afterwards. When a man has lost his last dollar at Monte he takes to the road. It must be a paradise for robbers; the pine woods and barrancas seem purposely intended for ambuscades. In short, Umbra, if you go there, go armed to the teeth, and keep your weather-eye open.

"We now ascended through the woods, and after several hours gained the ridge between the Volcano and the White Lady. Here all was sand, rock, and desolation; even the lichens ceased, and we came on huge blocks of black lava. We reached, just in time, a rancho, or wooden hut, where we were to pass the night. I say just in time; for there was no moon, and

here there is no twilight. One moment you are in a blaze of light of the sun; he sets, and you are in immediate darkness. When, however, there is a moon, it is difficult to picture the flood of light: light, white as ivory, in which all objects are bathed. We stabled our horses, and made our meal, and composed ourselves to rest; I in my plaid. You remember my plaid, Umbra, that went to Iceland afterwards?"

"Well."

"We did not sleep much, being rather excited; but were unable to move before the dawn. At the first sparkle in the east we were in the saddle, and rode about three miles, to where the snow and ice began. Even at this height our horses were much affected by the thinness of the air. We here dismounted, and began that long climb up the Sugar-Loaf. How long it lasted I am afraid to say. I remember at one moment a cloud came so close to me that it seemed as if I could put out my hand and touch it. I was afraid it would envelope me, but it did not. A little more climbing, and I was above it. And I may here mention the regularity with which, after sunrise, the dews rise from the ground, and leisurely take their stations as clouds round the hills, reminding me of Milton's words:—

'Ye mists and exhalations that now rise
From hill or steaming lake, dusky or gray,
Till the sun paint your fleecy skirts with gold :'

A description to which lately a thick-skulled critic objected. Milton, no doubt, had observed this in Italy, as it is common to hot countries. I have more than once rode through the thick fog after day-break, which would slowly rise like an enormous dragon in air, till at a certain altitude, catching the rays of the eastern sun, its whole side would change from gray to the golden hue which Milton talks of. This is a digression, Umbra; but I think it right to stand up for old Square-Toes when geese sibilate. He was a great chief.

"I was still climbing upwards. My two friends were ahead. My breath froze in ice on my green veil. The air was now so rarefied that I could breathe with difficulty. I had fallen down eighteen times or so; I could not take more than six steps without falling. At last I fell quite exhausted, and could not rise. I now felt bitterly that I must give up the enterprise. I was very much mortified. A loud shout from my friends in front told me they were at the top. I was about to give up within fifty yards of the summit. Of course, I managed to scramble up and join them.

"What a sight was that crater!—some miles in girth,

and unfathomably deep! From the dark abyss came hollow groans,—like the groans of a sullen despair; such as led the ancients to fable that an imprisoned Titan was crushed beneath Ætna super-imposed. And round the lip of the crater—a phenomenon which I have never been able to explain to myself—were three rows of icicles upright, tapering from the ground, from four to eight feet in height—frosty javelins. It was as though Nature in a sportive mood had placed a brilliant tiara on the brow of the Mount of Fire. Fresh sulphur was on the ground, of which we took away some small pieces. I think, though none of us had the bump of veneration inordinately developed, that we were all awed by the sublimity of the spectacle. I remember these lines came to my mind, as I mused on the primeval day, when in the vast upheaval of this ice-clad crater was a manifestation of Divine power:

'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.
Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the corner-stone thereof?
When the morning-stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy.'"

CHAPTER VII.

"We stood higher than any ground in North America —higher by two thousand feet than Mont Blanc in Europe. The view of course was limitless; but it was now somewhat hazy. The White Woman below us; on one side was the valley of Mexico, laid out like a bird's-eye map, on the other was Cholula, its pyramid, the plain and town of Puebla; and the snowy peak of Orizaba, next to ourselves in height, and the Cofre di Perote.

"The Indian who had our provisions never came up; but luckily I had in my pocket a piece of bread, which we divided, and also my small flask; and we all tasted some rum mixed with snow, which rather revived us. It was intensely cold; and after some time we thought it best to retreat.

"Merrily we sped down, using our Alpenstocks, which we had brought, as drags, in the approved mountaineer fashion; and it seemed we should do in a few moments

what had taken so many hours to ascend. When we came to that part where the sun had melted the snow early in the morning—and when it had gone off, the melted snow had frozen again in the shadow, and was slippery as glass—down went Grant, shooting down with frightful velocity; and I wondered whether he would reach the bottom alive, or be dashed to pieces against the lava rocks, when the same thing happened to me. In despite of the nails in my boots, I lost my footing. The Alpenstock fell from my grasp, and shot to the bottom, while I clung with bleeding hands to the ice. Down, down I went!"

X. was silent for some time. I thought he was overcome by recollections, and said—

"What more, X.?"

"The Ayes have it!" growled he in his sleep. He had actually dropped off.

"Had we not better move, X., or we shall be late at Golling?" and I laid my hand on his shoulder.

"The Ayes to the right, and the Noes to the left!" in a loud voice, and he started up. He looked at me as uncertain who I was, as a man still in his dream. At length he said, "Oh, is that you, Umbra! Are the ponies saddled? Where are the others?—Lodbrog, M'Diarmid, and Darwin, Digwell, and all?"

"Oh, X.! is your mind gone? We are not in Iceland; look up and you will see a tree. There is no tree in Iceland; and M'Diarmid is in Labrador; and Darwin and Digwell—why do you sadden me by recalling their fate?"

"And is it so, Umbra? I was in the land of dreams, and befooled by memory; but waking, I may say with the poet:—

'When to the sessions of sweet silent thought,
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes now wail my dear time's waste.

'Then can I drown an eye (unused to flow)
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night'—

"Vamos, Umbra, vamos—

"Yo no digo esta cancion
Sino a quien conmigo va!"

CHAPTER VIII.

PING! ping! What is that? Why, there is a bullet in the shutter of our hotel. They had been popping all the morning, but only *feu-de-joie*. Now they are firing at one another in earnest. There is civil war in the streets of Geneva—a storm in a tea-cup, as once profanely said; but this is no laughing matter, as several poor fellows are killed and wounded; and I sally out to see what is going on.

They were barricading the bridges with waggons containing wood and straw, and had planted field-pieces between to sweep the bridges, in case the other party attempted to cross the river. A great many red faces of English peered out from the windows of the Hôtel des Bergues, where they were locked up; and they all with one consent made a rather obvious remark, that the whole proceeding was unconstitutional.

I found X. on the quay, taking a steady look at the opposite bank through his opera-glass, which seemed in

great request, as people constantly came up and borrowed it of him to have a peep.

"Now, Umbra," said X., "this is most interesting. Look at all those fellows in blouses with their rifles and bayonets, and the women and children, and the orator there making them a speech. You see a miniature of the great French Revolution. You are in luck; it is better than reading Carlyle in small print."

"I tell you what, X.," said I, for I by no means admired the situation, "I shall not consider myself at all in luck if I get hit like the poor fellow I have just seen carried by on a stretcher. This is no affair of ours."

"Why, you are not frightened, Umbra?"

"Mr. X., my courage- "

"Is equal to that of Panurge after the storm, no doubt; but I don't think you will have any more fighting; it is over. See, they remove the barricades. If it came to the worst, we could act like an old gentleman I knew, who piqued himself on his conduct in a difficulty. Meeting a large crowd running away, and shouting that the lion had escaped out of Exeter 'Change, he called a coach: we could take a boat."

"Yes, let us take a row, X."

"Well, I have no objection. I want to go and look

at Neptune's Stone again." (This is a large rock in the lake, not far from the town, which got there no one knows how, and is said to have once been dedicated as an altar to Neptune.) X. looked at the distant hills.

"Do you know who I am thinking of, Umbra?"

"No."

"Of a poor devil who was burnt."

"Oh! Servetus."

"Not at all. Of Don Raphael, who, with his friend Don Ambrose de Lamela, were burnt by the Inquisition. Do you remember how he passed off as 'Son of the Sovereign of the Valleys between Switzerland, Savoy, and the Milanese?' It would be difficult to find such a principality, certainly, but it was cruel to burn a rogue who could tell such delightful stories as he did."

As our skiff touched the rock, X. folded his arms, and murmured—

"It was here that I all but consigned to death one of the most amiable of mankind."

"You surprise me. I did not even know that you had been at Geneva before."

"Many, many years ago, before those large houses with those horrid glass chimneys were built. I came here with my friend, Arthur Woolley. Poor dear

Arthur! he was two years older than me then. I think he must be younger now."

"You mean in mind?"

"No, in age."

"X., I really do not see how that is possible."

"Why, it depends how you calculate. How old would you call Rip Van Winkle at the time of his death? Would you count the fifty years he was dormant in Sleepy Hollow? Now, Arthur goes to sleep sometimes for a month or so, and these periods, I think, ought to be deducted from the term of his natural life."

"What a remarkable person!"

"The best; the cleverest; he was an universal favourite at college, — I need scarcely tell you, I was at the University of Oxbridge. Of course, one has long outlived the boyish folly, but I know of no conceit equal to collegiate conceit. I assure you, we looked upon men of another college as beings of a different species from ourselves. By the by, I remember we were not allowed to call our place a college, but a house. Our house was always in our mouths.

"Ah! poor, dear, old place! Well, when Arthur came up he bothered them sadly. He took to bed in the middle of term, and could not be got out the remainder. He locked and bolted his doors, and stood a siege.

Dean and sub-dean, dons, censors, tutors, proctors, porter, masters of arts, and pokers,– none were of avail to make the great sleeper rise! Then came the undergraduates and played him a concert of drums and fifes, hautboys, trombones, ophicleides, violoncellos, brass horns, marrowbones and cleaver, shovel and tongs, but the unconquerable votary of Morpheus slept calmly on!

"His rooms were on the ground-floor in quad, and we made an aperture by removing a window pane, and slipt in a youth who was then slim as Jack Sheppard. He has since grown to great fame, and greater size. Stealthily he crept up to the bedroom, and proceeded to awaken the somnolent one; but no sooner did he feel the tug at his bed-clothes, than the giant (for such he was) bounded up and pounced on his prey. Though the mildest and gentlest creature breathing in ordinary times, he was savage when disturbed in his sleep, and he punished poor little Jack, while we, who saw the sad spectacle through the windows, were unable to render assistance. His vengeance gratified, the enraged Patagonian returned to his bed and coiled himself up, having fortified his hold with a perfect arsenal of dangerous weapons, sticks, cricket-bats, fire irons, boots, and brass candlesticks, to hurl at the head of any who

should again molest his repose. At this conjuncture we held long council. At last looked up B."

"What! B. the eminent philanthropist?"

"The same. The destroyer, also, of M'Diarmid's philosophical instrument for weighing the earth at Alten. He looked up from his reflections, and said, 'My friends, we must try the mop dodge.'

"It was an inspiration; it came on us like a ray of light. The fortified bedroom looked on a back street. Here were conveyed buckets of water. A mop was inserted through the bars of the window; at the given signal, twirl went the mop, souse went the dirty water into the sleepy one's face, and with a hideous roar, such as poor Polyphemus gave when Ulysses poked out his eye, up jumped Arthur from his couch.

"Vain now were all his weapons of defence. He glared at us through the bars of the window with terrible but impotent wrath, and from that day he was in our power.

"He and I started abroad in a long vacation; it was the first time in our lives. How fresh and new everything was to us! how we did enjoy it all! If one could only feel like that again! In our young enthusiasm we walked up the old Rhine. You might have observed me look up the Lahn River the other day, when we

whizzed past in the railway. I was looking for the bridge. When Arthur and I came to the Lahn late at night, and footsore, we found the ferry-boat gone, and we had to walk two miles more to get to Boppart.

"Switzerland to us was enchanted ground. We did not grumble then at the badness of dinners, or get bored to death by the stories of our countrymen. Ah me! all was pleasant excitement then. Arthur himself slept very little, comparatively. At length we arrived here, and he said, 'I think I shall go to sleep for a fortnight. In the meanwhile, X., you may as well teach our friend Pipes to swim.'

"Johnny Pipes was a fellow-student, of amiable disposition; but he was born bald, and so continued without a vestige of hair on his head. He was a great fellow for music; given to singing of anthems. We had come across him at Geneva. I willingly assented. I was not near so good a swimmer then as I became after. Indeed, at that time, I was all but drowned one rough day on the rocks of the Castle of Chillon."

"What a romantic spot!"

"Was it not? I made some verses on it afterwards, and sent them to a Mag. Let me see, they began:

> 'O calm and beauteous lake! does that false smile
> Woo me to pardon thy deceitful guile?

May I forget, because thy something wave
Kisses my foot like a repentant slave?' "

"What!" exclaimed I; "are those your verses, X.? Often have I heard Darwin speak of them!"

"And what did he say?"

"That they were uncommon bad!"

Now, this shaft came not in reality from Darwin's quiver, but I owed X. a grudge for his remarks about my powers of authorship. Unfortunately, it glanced off the impenetrable cuirass of self-conceit.

"Well, Umbra, I daresay Darwin was quite right. I wrote verses once—'*semel insanivimus omnes.*' But few are proficients in separate paths of literature; and it is to my great work on the Currency that I look for fame. Where was I?—

"I taught Pipes as well as I could, towing him by a rope at the stern of the boat. At the end of a fortnight, we both thought he could manage to swim from the boat twenty yards to this rock, and we both struck out; I leading the way.

"I had only gone a few strokes when I looked round and Pipes was not. Where was he? Looking down, I saw the bald head sinking slowly through the clear blue water like a white stone. It was lessening, becoming

smaller and smaller to view. Slowly it sank; like the sack in Lord Byron's *Giaour*.

"I have read lately that they have divided a second in three thousand parts. I don't know if you can think three thousand times in a second. I hope not; but I thought a great deal in that time. I thought of the grief and agony of his mother, and how she would look on me as his murderer. Then I imagined supposing him to be a deadly enemy and rival, the struggle in an ill-disciplined mind whether to let him sink or swim; but I was neither an enemy nor a rival, only a great friend, and had never had a difference with him. I took rather a brilliant dive, and gave him a lift under his shoulder. To my surprise, he bounded up like a bladder, and the bald head wagged like a mandarin's pate on the surface of the lake. I got him safe to this rock, and was tremendously relieved. Poor Pipes! he sputtered a good deal, but was none the worse. That night he chanted *De profundis* with much fervour; but he never would let go the rope again."

"Where he is now?"

"Well; and singing everlastingly."

"And what became of Arthur?"

"He was to have gone into the Church, but as he

always slept Sunday round, that was an objection; otherwise he would no doubt have been a bishop by this time. He went into a public office, and it did admirably. He became their model man,—'*Surtout, Messieurs, point de zêle,*' said Talleyrand to his subordinates."

CHAPTER IX.

X. that evening was writing letters, and I descended to the smoking-room at the hotel, where I found one or two more. Among them was a gentleman in a blouse, with a ragged beard, drinking beer, and smoking a small clay pipe. He cast frequent glances at me, as though jealous of some imaginary offence, but finding no ground for his suspicions, he mollified, and we entered into conversation. After a few preliminary remarks, in answer to some inquiry of mine, he spoke as follows :—

"My name is Pons; Augustus Pons. I come of a respectable family, that has nothing very remarkable connected with it, except the name, which you will allow is peculiar. I have an ancient aunt, tenacious of the family dignity, who declares that we are descended straight from a Roman knight who helped Horatius Cocles to defend the bridge, and received the surname Pons in consequence, but I could never quite swallow this bit of history. I suppose some time or other we

came from France. At school, my form-fellows used to call me *Pons Asinorum*. I merely mention this in order that none may dare repeat the stupid joke.

"I think my chief annoyance in life, and which has lately embittered my existence, is that I chance to be related to a noble family, and that I am always looked on by the world in general in the light of their poor relation. Now, I care not who knows it, but I am of a proud and sensitive disposition; moreover, I am rather a Radical, and belong to a club for vindicating the Rights of Man. The imputation, therefore, of being a poor relation of the aristocracy is disgusting to me. In one sense, of course, it is true; for I am a relation, and I am not rich. But then I do not live on them; I do not borrow their money. I pay my own way, and the term 'poor relation' implies the reverse of all this,—a spunger, sir; a hanger-on. If formerly I could have ever detected the slightest sign of an attempt to treat me as such, I would have ruthlessly cut my kindred; but I am bound to say, my uncle and aunt always treated me with unvarying kindness. Still, if I went to Shropshire to spend Christmas, I observed the hebete neighbours whispering to one another an inquiry as to who I was, and I knew instinctively the answer returned was, 'Pons—a poor relation.' Or in London, if asked to

dine in Grosvenor Square, my uncle would say to me, 'Augustus, a glass of wine,' a telegram would circulate round the table, through Dowagers and Guardsmen, respecting my status in life, till some one supplied the desired information by replying, 'A country cousin; a poor relation.' Oh, how on these trying occasions I have envied the sublime assurance of my cousin Charles Pons, who, wearing a glass stuck hard in his eye, gorgonises all the company with a stony stare, as Mr. Tennyson has it. However, I have nothing to say about that conceited kinsman of mine just at present.

"Such mortifying incidents were, of course, only exceptions to the ordinary tenor of my life, and I cherished my feelings of manly independence up to the other day, when, having a holiday, I started for a tour in Switzerland. If I did not carry 'pride in my port, defiance in my eye,' as Goldsmith describes the English of his day, or fancy myself 'a lord of humankind,' like so many of these poor little British snobs you and I, sir, see strutting about the Continent, and giving themselves ridiculous airs, still, on leaving my native shore free and unencumbered, how little did I anticipate the degraded state of slavery into which I was soon to fall!

"I was at Chamounix; having dined; and was taking my coffee very comfortably in the verandah of the hotel.

Several members of the Alpine Club were there; fine fellows they are too; and I listened to their account of most moving incidents on snow, and rock, and glaciers, till, tired of remaining silent so long, I casually asked, 'Have any of you been in South America?' No, none of them had been there; then I knew I had it my own way; and I blush to say, I related several stories tending to prove that the Alps were molehills compared to the Andes, and I finished my coffee, and swaggered away with a self-satisfied air.

"Next day a gentlemanlike man, whom I designated in my own mind as a clerical athlete, accosted me, asked me several questions about my plans, and finding I had no settled plans, observed, 'This is the very thing; I wish much to go over the Col du Géant; you must come with me; it is a very difficult pass; three poor Englishmen and their guide were lost there a few years ago;'—(why is it everybody announces a melancholy fact with such astonishing zest?)—'very difficult,' said he; 'but, of course, it will be child's play to you, after the Andes.'

"'Oh, that was a long time ago, when I was young,' said I, bitterly repenting my brags of the former evening. 'I do not think I could manage a difficult pass now.'

"'Pooh,' said he, 'you must come;' and with horrid energy he rushed off and engaged guides, and made preparations; and eventually, much mistrusting myself, I was led off like a lamb to the slaughter, to sleep at the Montanvert, whence we started at the first dawn of light next morning."

"Now, sir," resumed the narrator, after a very long puff of smoke, "I know you have made up what you are pleased to term your mind on two points; and it is singular, but you are entirely wrong on both. In the first place, you think I am going to describe the Pass, and I shall do nothing of the kind. It is true that I at one time entertained some thoughts of scribbling some verses about it, and I went so far as to write some lines, mainly cribbed from Shelley; but I was afraid if I published them I should be detected. If you want to know anything about the Col, turn to Ball's *Western Alps*, and read the description. You will find magniloquent talk of five frozen Niagaras, piled one over the other. The only fault I have to find in this is, why five?—why stick at five?—why not fifty-five, which is the truer proportion? But never mind! In the second place, I know you have rashly prejudged that I knocked up and could not proceed. Again, sir, you are wrong. I certainly was very tired at one

moment, but looking round, saw my friend the athlete at the end of the cord, apparently so exhausted, that the sight gave me much comfort, and I proceeded with renewed vigour. Still, I own I was very glad when at the top of the Pass. I saw Italy; blue and Salvator Rosa-ish it looked. In fine, after fifteen hours, twelve of which were hard walking, I walked into Cormayeur merry as a grig, and had a warm bath, and excellent dinner.

"I have no wish to inflict on any one an account of my tour, but if you wish it, I will not withhold from you the benefit of the few notes dotted down in my journal.

"'Cormayeur: inn good; *vin d'Asti* capital; met a strapping young Englishman, six feet two inches high, who drank a bottle of it every day at breakfast; said he was in delicate health, and his physician had prohibited tea and coffee as injurious to the nerves. A very wide-awake fellow that!'

"'Crammont: rather steep, as the late Duke of Wellington observed to George the Fourth, when the latter informed him he had galloped down the Devil's Dyke.'

"'Aosta: town dirty; Roman arch; tomatoes good; fruit dirt cheap.'

"'Val Tournanche: fine waterfall; flies bite like bull-dogs.'

"Why do I dwell on these details? Why do I dally, as it were, with these trifles, before I come to the fatal period, when Pons was to fall into unworthy and unmerited servitude?"

CHAPTER X.

"I HAD crossed the Théodule, and at the hotel at Zermatt I entered the *salle-à-manger*, at the end of which were two ladies, very handsome, dressed absurdly smart, I thought at the time (but I found afterwards they piqued themselves on the simplicity of their costume). I did not pay much attention to them just then, being, to speak the truth, voraciously hungry; when, after reconnoitring the new-comer through an eye-glass, one of them exclaimed, 'Why, if it is not Pons! Augustus, don't you know us?' and then, looking closer, I recognised my cousins Edith and Ethelreda.

"We had been very good friends formerly, in their schoolroom days, but since they had come out, and become the beauties of a London season (I never go out into the frivolous fashionable world, which with all my heart I hate and despise; I leave it to that ass, Charles Pons), I had seen but little of them. Edith

had married Lord Marazion, a very good sort of a man, I believe. She was small, piquante, and clever. Ethelreda, who was tall and stately, had espoused a Colonel Martingale, a great hulking dragoon, to whom, I fear, she is unreasonably attached. Both these worthies, their husbands, had gone to some races, Goodwood, Doncaster, or Baden, I forget which, and their wives were scampering about Switzerland, Alpenstock in hand, pretending an enthusiasm for mountains, and quoting Manfred; though it is my belief they did not care a pin for the one, and did not understand the other.

"As I approached, there was a hurried whispering between the two, and I caught the words 'Yes, that will just do.' I wondered what would just do.

"'Sit down, my dear Pons,' said Lady Marazion in a caressing voice. 'We have not seen you for an age. Tell us what you have been about; and what are you going to do now? What are your plans?'

"Now, I had not any definite plans. My friend the athlete had left me, and I was alone; however, I replied that I should stop three days at the Riffel, and go over the Simplon to Maggiore, Orta, Lugano, Como, Venice, and so on.

"The two ladies exchanged glances, and Edith said—

"'You see, my dear Pons, we are rather in a difficulty. Ethelreda had some words with our courier this morning, and she—'

"'Horsewhipped him, I suppose!'

"Ethelreda knit her brows like a seal, and said, 'Don't be impertinent, Pons!'

"'No,' resumed Edith; 'she told him he was *bête* and an *imbécile*. So we are in an *embarras*. We have no one with us. If you—'

"'You do not expect me to turn courier, do you?'

"'No, no; but if you would come and take care of us—'

"'You would not abandon two unprotected females, would you?' said Ethelreda, who was strong and brave as a lioness, and could have knocked down a bullock, much more a man, with a blow of her paw—hand, I mean.

"'You see, dear Augustus,' said the other wilily, 'it would not do for us who are young and—' Here the spokeswoman, with a sweet humility, looked at the reflection of her pretty face in an indifferent mirror. 'It would not do for us to travel about quite alone, or with other people; but as you are a near relation, and—'

"'Neither young nor good-looking!' interposed Ethelreda.

"'Madam!' said I, in a rage.

"'Pooh, pooh, Pons, how sensitive you are! Ethelreda is only joking. But you will come, will you not?'

"What was I to do? I am naturally of a chivalrous turn. You need not look incredulous, sir! Besides, I was really glad to see my cousins; and perhaps not altogether insensible to what I thought the distinction of escorting two beautiful ladies, and doing them the honours of Switzerland. Idiot that I was, and blind! In a rash moment—a moment of infatuation, I may call it—I gave my assent, and the doom of Augustus Pons was sealed!

"'We start to-morrow evening,' said one of the cousins. 'You had better go and see about our mules at once.'

"'Wait till I have had some dinner first,' said I.

"'What a fellow you are, Pons, always thinking of eating and drinking!'

"Now, this was excellent. I had tasted nothing since Bruhl, nine hours before, on the other side of the Alps; and the two ladies were sitting at their dessert after, no doubt, an excellent dinner, an empty bottle of champagne on the table, and sipping their coffee. However, I thought I would not begin by being churl-

ish, so I went and settled about their mules before I appeased my hunger.

"After dinner I was sitting out of doors, and about to light my pipe, when the Hon. Mrs. Martingale observed—

"'I hope you don't mean to smoke when you are with us, Pons; Edith may not like it—'

"'Why, Marazion smokes like a chimney,' said I.

"'A husband may do things which others may not.'

"'I don't dispute that, Ethelreda, but if you think I am going to give up smoking, you are much mistaken.' The spirit of independence rose strong in me, and I puffed away like Mongibello, till Ethelreda remarked, 'Well, if you will smoke, I think I will have a weed myself,' and taking a cigarette out of an embroidered cigar-case, she lighted it. *O tempora! O mores!* I was nearly sending this trait of modern life to the gentleman who cuts up ladies' characters in the *Saturday Review*, but as I considered the fellow a prig, I abstained from doing so.

"Next morning, instead of leisurely ascending to the Riffel, as I had intended, I was called at an indecently early hour, and told that the ladies'-luggage was ready for me to see it packed on muleback. There it all was: bags and boxes; boxes and bags. After cursing the

muleteers in choice Arabic, I got it all done, and was told that the ladies had finished their breakfast, and were ready to depart. Hurrying back to swallow a cup of weak coffee, the landlady rushed in on me, '*Vite, vite, dépêchez donc, Monsieur, Mi-lady vous attend.*' What a speech to be addressed to the Vice-President of the Rights-of-Man Club! Darting at the foolish woman a look which ought to have transfixed her, pachydermatous creature though she was, I grasped my Alpenstock, and leisurely followed the mounted travellers. From that hour began for me a course of painful slavery. No paid courier worked half so hard as I; none would have stood one quarter the amount of scolding. If anything went wrong, I got all the obloquy; credit I obtained never.

"Videlicet:—

"*First,* When they refused, in spite of my remonstrances, to leave the hotel till the last moment, and arrived in time to see the train depart,—'How could you be so stupid, Pons?' was the only remark that suggested itself to the cousinly mind.

"*Second,* When Ethelreda left her leather bag, which she always insisted on carrying herself, at Loeche, I was sent back from Martigny to retrieve it, besides being told that I was a brute for not having looked

after it. She said it contained an inestimable treasure, her husband's portrait; as if I cared one button for that heavy dragoon or his portrait. On the contrary, the whole way I plodded along, I sincerely hoped he might be losing his money at the races.

"*Third,* These ladies were subject to frequent changes of mind. At breakfast they would observe, 'Pons, have you telegraphed to Chamounix to take rooms, as we told you last night?' 'Yes,' said I proudly, 'it is done.' 'Why were you in such a hurry, Pons? go and countermand them; we have changed our intentions, we will go to Berne.' When rooms were ordered at Berne, they would chop and change to Vevey, and so on, every day; the consequence is, there is hardly now a first-rate hotel in Switzerland, where I am not regarded as an impostor, and if I go to any such, I have to go under an *alias,* dropping the respectable name of Pons.

"*Fourth,* When they came to a town they would begin shopping, as though they had landed from a shipwreck, or been out of the pale of civilisation for years. I was made to follow, carrying bundles of cloths, silks, muslins, crinolines,—I know not what! I was burdened like a camel. Again I say, no professional courier would have stood this. 'You can pay, Pons; you shall be our banker; we have full confidence in you,'

was the flattering remark, as I was made to disburse for heaps of useless articles. Only one thing I stood out against: no earthly power would induce me to purchase or carry for them any of those abominable Swiss toys, the reiterated sight of which afflicts me with a nausea.

"*Fifth*, When they came to a 'fools-parade' place like Interlaken, and met acquaintance, they would flirt—or what in my frame of mind I called flirting—with a set of scoundrels, at least I considered them all such; while I followed laden with plaids, cloaks, and umbrellas. I really believe that on these occasions I *was* taken for their courier, till I joined in conversation, and, to show my independence, invariably contradicted flat every man who spoke. My cousins would afterwards inform me that I behaved like a bear, which, on looking back without prejudice, I am inclined to believe was not far from the truth.

"All this time I was being dragged to places where I had been before, and which I did not wish to see again. But I was destined to fall to a far lower depth, compared with which my first state of probation seemed on looking back a fair and palmy epoch; for as nations trodden down by despots have still the last resort of an appeal to arms, so I, oppressed as I

was, still retained the power of running away, and leaving my two tyrants to shift for themselves, when by an absurd incident I was deprived of this ultimate mode of reasserting my freedom. I lost my purse, with all my ready money. Losing money is always a bore; still as I had some circular notes in my desk, and as my relatives by this time owed me a considerable sum in francs, I did not allow the loss to weigh on my spirits, but casually mentioned it in the evening. I did not see anything in the circumstance calculated to promote hilarity, but the announcement was received with repeated bursts of laughter. 'What! lost your purse, Pons, and all your money? What immense fun!'

"As I said before, I did not see the fun; but I contented myself with asking for a small loan, or rather part repayment. To my astonishment this was flatly refused. The mask was now thrown off. 'Oh no, Pons,' said Lady Marazion, 'that would never do; if you got money, you might give us the slip; you are now in our power; we have got in you a first-rate courier gratis, and we mean to keep you to your work.'

"From this time forth I was bound, as it were, hand and foot. They used, I think, to study the map, and avoid any town where circular notes could be changed.

In vain did I look for the arms of Lombardy over some pawnbroker's shop, where I might pledge my watch. The three balls seemed unknown in Swiss villages. I was worse off than a boy at school, who has his pocket-money regular. If I wanted a cup of coffee at a café, I had to go and beg for the coin first. I could never get more than a franc at a time. 'It is not good for your morals, Pons, to have command of too much money,' would say these facetious creatures, whom I had known as two cluts in the nursery. They paid all bills now, and narrowly scrutinized my personal expenses. 'How much wine you drink, Pons! another half bottle down to your account!' and so on, with atrocious persiflage.

"My spirit was broken. I became like the prisoners to the Malays, whom I have read of; the muscles of whose legs the cruel captors break to prevent their running away. Like them, I attained a kind of despairing resignation to my fate. Though I sometimes murmured to myself, '*I demens et curre per Alpes*,' that you may become the drudge of two fine ladies, yet I never dared complain aloud. Humbled was now the crest of Pons. None would have recognised in him the Vice-President of the Rights-of-Man Club.

"At last we came to Geneva, where, of course, there

was a banker, and I acquired possession of money. How I gloated over the yellow pieces! But my cousins were to depart immediately for Paris, and I would not come to open quarrel. As a last duty, I was ordered to see the luggage brought down and conveyed to the railway station. As I approached the ladies' room I heard a struggle, as though of one striving to shut a resisting box, and then a voice exclaimed, 'Oh, Ethelreda, I shall never get it down! It won't close. I should have liked to take it home for my little Jack.' On which another voice answered, 'I tell you what, you can give it—' Here my respectful knock to know if all was ready—piles and piles of luggage it proved—cut short the dialogue.

"'Have you made the account out between us, Pons?' asked the ladies.

"This I had done at their request, after tremendous mental labour, and much incertitude about an odd centime; and I handed several sheets of foolscap, on which all was correctly stated.

"'Very good; I see we are still in your debt. I don't think we can pay you now, as our money is at the bottom of the box. We can send it you from Paris (this they did honestly). By the way, Pons, we have taken your strap to buckle our Alpenstocks together.' This

was my pet leather strap; but I was so utterly broken and subdued that I said it did not matter; and I conveyed to the railway the luggage, which seemed to me adapted to meet the wants of an Indian army undertaking a distant campaign.

"'Good-bye, old Pons,' said Ethelreda at the railway station. 'Keep up your spirits when we are gone.'

"But Edith smiled a graceful smile, and said, 'Dear Augustus, you have been so kind and useful to us that I feel quite sorry we must part.'

"Pons (that is I) was so unaccustomed to be treated with civility that he thought that there must be some reason for it, and stared with distrustful amazement at the pretty little hypocrite. [The narrator here gnashed his teeth at me, Umbra.] 'And,' continued she, 'Ethelreda and I wish to make you some return for your attentions, so we have bought you a little present as a *souvenir* of our tour;' and she placed a small wooden case in my hands, as she hopped into the railway carriage.

"I confess I was devoured with anxiety to know what the case would contain. Had it been any article of large pecuniary value, that, sir, would have been an affront; that would have been paying for my services, treating me as a poor relation; that would have been an insult, sir, and I should have sought explanation of

their— [the reciter here looked fiercely at me, Umbra]; but, no, it was preposterous; it could not be that. A friendly remembrance I could not object to; I should have prized it; but I had grown suspicious from their long ill-usage of me. I determined to ascertain the truth. I opened the case, and saw—what, sir, what do you think, sir?—one of those abominable toys, a Swiss *châlet*, sir, which she knew I loathed and execrated. A light flashed on me. This was the thing that would not go into the box; the thing she wanted to take home to her little Jack, now palmed off on me, forsooth! The train was beginning to move, when I placed the case on the ground; and as their carriage passed, assuming a malignant smile, I gave the box one kick that sent it and its *châlet* spinning to the end of the platform; and then, turning on my heel, I walked away. I fear I heard a smothered laugh inside the railway carriage!

"I have now regained my freedom, but not my former sense of independence. That month of servitude, sir, has cast a blight on my life. I am somewhat like the old prisoner who was turned out of the Bastile when it was taken. He could no longer taste the sweets of liberty. It is very odd; my cousins were awful bullies certainly, yet somehow I felt sad and lonely when they were gone."

CHAPTER XI.

THE martyr to his connexion with aristocracy had retired, and I was left alone with a gentleman who owned sandy hair and very red cheeks. He had never once spoken, but had attracted my attention by the loudness of repeated sighs, and the constancy with which he applied himself to a black bottle, the contents of which he mingled with hot water and sugar.

"There goes my eighth tumbler," I heard him say to himself, and turning to me he politely added, "Aiblins you'd like a drap yoursel', sir, for it is rare to get it in these parts."

"May I ask what it is?"

"Whisky! It is sent to me express. It is a' I hae now to remind me o' my ain country. I drink it from love of my ain dear land; it cheers the puir exile."

It would have been hard to complain of any want of patriotism in the speaker.

"Have you been long abroad, sir?" I asked.

"Na; twa weeks I spent at Paris. Ye ken Paris, nae dou't?"

"Very well," said I; "it is a splendid city."

"It is a big braw toon; but for pleesure, gi'e me Dumfries."

"But my dear sir," said I, "if you prefer Scotland so much, I wonder you come abroad."

My new friend seemed quite excited at this remark. "And is it by my ain wull," said he, "that I am here? Wad I not rather live on tea and cookies at hame, than feast on a' the wines of Germany and France? But never again shall I see auld Scotland mair—'Land of the mountain and the flood!' as Sir Walter hath it. Never again shall I tread the heathery brae; never again shall I wander by the burn, where I pu'ed gowans when I was a bare-shanked callant; never again, Auld Reekie, shall I breathe thy caller air, or smell thee as of yore. Na, na; the bones of the last of the —— must now fructify the policy of some forrin laird!" and my friend took his ninth tumbler. Indeed, by this time he was decidedly what he himself would call *fou*.

"But why should you not return?"

"There is a reeson for it; a sair reeson."

[The Publishers regret exceedingly that they find

themselves at the last moment compelled to suppress this history. It appears that the adventure, the subject-matter of the Bailie's discourse, was revealed under the seal of strictest confidence to Umbra (with whom the Publishers have at present no means of communicating), and that its publication would cause annoyance to a most estimable and excellent individual. Mr. Alexander Pope has said

> "Curst be the verse, howe'er so well it flow,
> That tends to make one worthy man my foe;"

and the Publishers feel that prose ought to be no exception to the rule.]

CHAPTER XII.

I TOLD X. in the morning the two narratives that had been confided to me, and he was excessively amused. "As for the Scotch Bailie," said he, "I think he was quizzing you, Umbra; he meant it for what in the North is called a piece of '*wut*;' but I know Pons; he was always a most touchy fellow; his bristles were up in a moment, and they used to call him Porcupine Pons. His cousins are two of the most charming ladies I am acquainted with; the stupid lout did not know when he was in good luck. I wish, Umbra, that we had met them;" and poor X. stroked his grizzled moustache.

A little later, the greeting between X. and Pons was a study. It is said that the art of recognition is only cultivated in the highest perfection by gentlemen of the University of Oxbridge, and these two had been at different colleges. The quills of Pons seemed ready to stand on end at the shortest notice. However, there was no occasion, as they both saluted one another with

much apparent civility. The Bailie I found rather the worse for the last tumbler of toddy, and not near so talkative as on the previous evening.

Soon after, I heard voices loud in the passage, and repairing there, discovered all three discoursing with an individual who stood six feet two in his stockings, with hair white as snow, in whom I had no difficulty in recognising the celebrated Sir Herbert O'Dowd, Her Majesty's Envoy at the Court of Samarcand.

Sir Herbert was the last representative of a race that has ceased to exist, the wild Irish gentry, replete with humour, full of rollicking fun, always ripe for mischief, always in a scrape, and it is needless to say, in debt. At one time they amazed every capital in Europe with their eccentricities.

> "But some are dead, and some are gone,
> And some are scattered and alone,
> And some are living at Boulogne."

Among these, Sir Herbert owed his celebrity to having acquired the reputation of being far the most illustrious swearer of his day, not that it is to be supposed he was at all of vulgar demeanour or of quarrelsome disposition. On the contrary, his manners were most high bred and distinguished, somewhat of the old-fashioned school of French politeness engrafted on the Celt. Ordinarily he

rapped out his oaths quite unconsciously, and the little expletives that enriched his discourse could only be regarded as superfluous adjuncts in the Greek or Italian dialects. He was so good-natured that, to use his own terms, a child might gambol with him. It was only when the sleeping lion was roused by fancied insult that the explosive nature of his temperament manifested itself. Then the whole frame dilated with anger; his visage glowed like the sun seen through an eclipse, or the simoom of the desert, while his "horrid hair," as Milton says of the comet's, stood erect; and from his mouth proceeded fierce eloquence, which the imaginative sons of Italy compared to the lava stream from Mongibello; and in consequence of these slight peculiarities they bestowed on him the honourable title of *Il rosso, grosso, e furibondo.*

For it was in sunny Naples that the O'Dowd commenced his diplomatic career, and often have I laughed at the cause of its suspension. It was just after the restoration of the Bourbons, and a feast of the Church was being celebrated with marked pomp and solemnity. The whole garrison was under arms, and salutes of cannon thundered from the Castle of St. Elmo. Through the streets defiled the long procession of priests and monks. Carmelites in white, Benedictines in black,

and the Capuchins in brown. As they marched along the Chiaja, a party of foreigners looked on the spectacle from the windows of an apartment, when, to the horror of all, up jumped the O'Dowd from a late breakfast, and apparently moved by irresistible impulse, hurled an egg at the visage of the leading Capuchin, who was bearing a sainted banner. Full and fair struck the egg on his lips and nose. Down dropped the Capuchin, and up stairs rushed the guard with fixed bayonets. Calmly the O'Dowd ate his breakfast; and when the reason of the soldiers' entry was explained to him, nothing could exceed his horror at the belief entertained that he, a true son of the Church (for he was a Roman Catholic), should offer insult to a religious procession. "Did he take him for a heretic?" he indignantly asked the sergeant, who was much puzzled. "*Se era generale o ammirale poca cosa, ma il capo dei Capucini e ferito:*" a general or admiral would not so much matter, but the chief of the Capuchins has been hit. Still the O'Dowd calmly ate his breakfast; but on matters being reported, the Lucretian theory that casual eggs came in contact with casual Capuchins seemed so curious to them in Downing Street, that the O'Dowd was transferred to Washington.

There the richness of his vocabulary had much

astonished the American mind. It was said that one gentleman from Illinois, who had hitherto borne the palm for energy of diction, on meeting his Milesian rival, was so mortified at his own obvious inferiority that he pined away in consequence. "If the devil wants a storekeeper," he was heard to say, "he had better apply for that 'coon, O'Dowd; he whips us all in cussing."

After a long sojourn at Washington, he was transferred to the East, and finally was knighted, and became the Queen's Plenipotentiary at Samarcand. It is related of him, that having been absent from England for many years, and returning suddenly, he went, like an affectionate brother, to see his sister, settled in Hampshire. The lady was in her flower-garden, separated from the road by a belt of high laurels, when she heard the distant sound of wheels, and then, in address to the post boy, came to her ears, wafted on the summer breeze, a strain, not

> "Like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets;"

but a volley of oaths so original, so racy, so exquisite, that she involuntarily clasped her hands together, and murmured, "Dear, dear Herbert; he must be returned. No one else could swear so beautifully as that."

This gifted individual was now in a state of violent excitement, brandishing a huge shillelah, and seemingly quite ready for a combat *à la* Donnybrook Fair. I ascertained that he had been roused up in the middle of the night by a new-comer, who had announced himself as Turkish Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary, and had broached the lordly but unconstitutional doctrine, that as such he was entitled to the best bedroom in the house. Sir Herbert, in legal possession of the bed, had naturally stood on his rights, and repulsed the intruder, and now he declared he would have his revenge.

"I tell you, sir," said he, "the haythen blackguard knocked at my door without ever asking my lave. An Englishman's house is his castle, and I do not see why an Irishman's bedroom should not be held as sacred. Faith, he murdered my first slape, and is it that ye call justice to Ireland?"

Here X. could not resist going off with :–

"'He murdered sleep, the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleave of care ;
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course.'"

"Is it second course, ye say, Mr. X.? I tell you I had not got through my first course. I had not tasted

forty winks when the circumcised dog rapped at my door; but it is my turn now," and he gave a most ominous twist to his shillelah. Here I overheard X. murmur a long remonstrance, and I caught the words "Foreign Office," "Majesty's Representative," "row."

"Now, arrah, be aisy, X., you are not a bad fellow, but you do not understand the matter at all at all. Sure, I will not hurt the varlet. I would not dirty my fingers with his blood; but stand by, and you will see me tache the spalpeen the 'swate civilities of life,' and there is a bit of glorious John for you in return for your Shakspeare, Master X."

Sir Herbert accordingly led the way to the apartment of his late invader, and commenced with his stick beating a tatoo on the door. As a skilful butler, striking a gong in a country-house, begins by gentle taps scarce audible, and then increases his efforts till the sound swells into loud diapason pervading the whole building, and summoning the inmates from remotest chambers to dinner, even so drummed his Excellency on the shut door. I never heard a more infernal *tintamarre*:—

> "Dopo la dolorosa rotta quando
> Carlo Magno perde là santa gesta,
> Non sono si terribilmente Orlando!"

when suddenly open flew the door and there appeared,

surmounted with shaven skull, a tawny nude figure, which may possibly have been majestic in the full costume of an Eastern magnate rich with barbaric pearl and gold, but which now, in its unadorned state, was inconceivably ludicrous. The poor Mussulman was in an agony of fear; drops of sweat stood on his forehead, and he evidently thought the Giaour was bent on his destruction, and his last hour had come. X., myself, and the others, leaned against the wall in convulsions of laughter; while Sir Herbert, with most stately good breeding, and an air of the "*vieille Cour*" presented his card, and in French expressed to his *cher confrère* his great regret that he had been unable to receive him, when he had done him the honour to call the previous evening, but that he could not think of leaving Geneva without returning the visit. Having then made him a bow worthy of Louis Quatorze to a foreign ambassador, he retired, and we with him. We all proceeded together to Strasburg. The Bailie was persuaded that it would be better for him to return to his native town, and boldly face any jokes that might be cracked on his adventure.[1] I regret to say, that Sir Herbert abused his powers as a narrator, for finding this excellent man listened to all his stories

[1] See Chapter XI. !

with the most marked attention, he embroidered, to use a mild term, to a considerable extent. At the conclusion of every anecdote the Bailie would exclaim, "Wonderful! wonderful! what a deal you have seen, Sir Herbert;" while the latter, stimulated by his admiration, increased his mystifying power, occasionally appealing for corroborative circumstances to X., who without moving a muscle of his countenance, gravely assented to all he said. What new light was now poured on me! Now I learned, for the first time, how the battle of Leipsic had been decided by a charge of a Russian regiment, with the young O'Dowd at its head; how the fall of Napoleon had been precipitated by the advice given by the same youthful diplomate to the Emperor Alexander and Prince Nesselrode; and how few ladies of the Royal Houses of Europe had escaped falling victims to the fascinations of the same modest individual; and still, at the conclusion of each romantic episode, the Bailie shouted "Wonderful!"

Thus encouraged, the *raconteur* took a flight across the sea. In the Brazils he had seen a roc's egg; and he had helped a beautiful abbess to escape from a convent. The first time I heard the latter story, the abbess became Lady O'Dowd; on the second occasion, she was bricked up alive in the convent dungeon. I

cannot, therefore, speak with any certainty as to her fate. At last the Envoy at Samarcand took us to the East, and there, in the land the birthplace of fiction, it is needless to say his genius had full swing. "Ye may perhaps have heard, sir, of my combat with Kara Oglou, the chief of Kurdistan. He was reputed the best swordsman in Asia, and invited me to fight on horseback; it was scarce in accordance with my official duties to do so, but it was not for the credit of a Kilkenny man to decline. In three minutes I cut his horse's reins, and he was at my mercy; but I spared him his life. We exchanged gifts, like the heroes of old. He gave me a silver-mounted yataghan; and I presented him with a gold snuff-box, adorned with a medallion of my kind friend and gracious master George the Fourth on the lid."

"What was the gentleman's name, sir?"

"Oh, we called him the Khan familiarly; we became fast friends, I assure you." He sent to ask me over to his place the last time he roasted a Jesuit missionary."

"Roasted a missionary, Sir Herbert! surely you are jesting?"

"Is it jesting ye mane? Shure it was no jest for the Reverend Père Lagrange! Poor fellow, I had known him at Paris, and we had often supped together at the

Rocher de la Cancale; he left me some trifling commissions to fulfil, and gave me his rosary before they tied him to the spit."

"What! did you attend his execution?"

"Would you have had me miss, sir, such an interesting sight?" and here Sir Herbert detailed with much gravity all the minutiæ of this remarkable event. He told us how two executioners slowly basted the victim with lard to prevent his too speedy incremation; but when he came to describe how the flesh of the sufferer had assumed the appearance of crackling on roast pork, the kind-hearted Bailie could stand it no longer, but exclaiming, "Oh! horrible!—horrible!—too horrible!"—he darted out the room!

"You have come it rather strong, Sir Herbert, to night," said X.

"*Populus vult decipi*," replied the narrator, thus satisfying his conscience.

The next morning these two went off to Wildbad to visit a friend, but I declined to accompany them, as from my dream I feared I might there meet the ghost or "*scinlava*" of Darwin.

"Poor Darwin!" said X., "we are almost in sight of the little island in the Rhine where he fought his famous duel, which made such a sensation in Germany.

Some thought it was on account of a beautiful Jewish lady at Baden, but the quarrel was put on the ground whether Potzdausent, the ancestor of his antagonist, the twenty-fifth baron of that name, was as great a hero as Siegfried of the Sword, mentioned in the Niebelungen-lied. They fought with broadswords, and Darwin clove the Baron to the chine.

"He was, indeed, a man of unconquerable might. I may say of him as was said of Sir Lancelot du Lac: 'Thou wert the meekest man, and the gentlest that ever sat in hall among ladies; hem! and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest.' Do you remember when the omnibus tried to run him down before the United Service Club, and all the warriors within hobbled to the windows to witness the fray? Darwin overthrew horses, driver, and omnibus, but the Iceland volcano was too much even for him."

We were now at the railway station, and had seen our departing friends in the carriage, when just as the train was about to start, Sir Herbert called to the unfortunate Pons, and in a feigned whisper, distinctly audible to all on the platform, tendered him this parting scrap of consolation,—

"Why are ye in such low spirits, my poor friend?

Arrah, don't blush now! I know all about it. We had a good laugh about you at Lucerne; they call you the Dummkopf. So ye were swate on Mrs. Martingale, were ye? and she snubbed you? but nivir mind, me boy, ye are not the only Dummkopf in the world. I remember meeself, there was a Russian lady at Astracan—," but here the train went on, cutting short the diplomate's reminiscences, and leaving poor Pons quite thunderstruck. "How dared he couple my name with Mrs. Martingale's?" said he, "and what is the meaning of the word Dummkopf? Why, the whole object of my life has been to avoid any peculiarity, and now I am told by a comparative stranger that I am known over Switzerland as the Dummkopf; what can it mean?"

I declined to enlighten him on this point, and Pons went in search of a stationer's shop, where he might procure a German dictionary. He returned frantic, and insisted that I should follow Sir Herbert to Wildbad with a hostile message from him; but I said I was a pacific individual, and formally declined. And the Bailie being appealed to, remarked that he was a magistrate, and that duelling was sinful. Finally, we persuaded Pons that it would not do for him to call out a man so advanced in years that he had won the battle of Leipsic, and with his soul full of bitterness, and all

his plumes ruffled, Pons went off that night to Homburg. I trust he was not one of the thirty-four persons who, I am informed by the paper, committed suicide in the course of the year at that watering-place. Poor Pons! porcupine though you be, I trust not. I have never seen him since.

Sir Herbert and X., after their visit to Wildbad, rejoined me, and we all proceeded home together. I remember nothing particular, except that at Coblenz we had all gone to bed, when more than one tap was heard at the several doors in the passage. "Halloa! Umbra," cried X. to me, for the inn being full, we slept in a double-bedded room, "I think the house must be on fire; that is the way the steward knocks at the cabins of a Mississippi steamer when he wants to let the passengers know that the boat is going down. Now, Umbra, be cool, I beg; don't let any one see you uncollected," and X. put on his nether garments, and proceeded to the door.

He found there a waiter who wished to know whether he would like to buy some panoramic views of the scenery of the Rhine.

To do X. justice, he did not often lose his temper; but at this moment the ascender of volcanoes was woefully put out at being summoned from his bed to look

at things which, even at ordinary hours, he held in great aversion. He was probably on the point of expressing himself strongly, when, thinking he might perhaps do it vicariously, and far more effectually, he pointed to Sir Herbert's room, and quietly awaited the result.

"Am I never to have my rest undisturbed?" said the awakened Irishman, as he slowly struggled out of bed and came to the door. When he saw some long drawings unrolled and spread out for his inspection, he at first seemed incredulous that he could have been summoned out of bed for such a purpose. It was the breathless stillness of the air before the hurricane; the smoothness of Niagara before the river hurtles over the fall. A moment's pause, and then when the truth was really brought home to his mind, down came the thunder and lightning. Our army swore awfully in Flanders. Ernulphus, as read out by Dr. Slop, excelled in malediction; but what were even these to the cataract of curses which now descended on the unseasonable waiter? From every country in which Sir Herbert had at various times of his chequered career resided, he culled some choice anathema. He cursed the trembling wretch in French, Italian, and Spanish. He called on all the saints in paradise, and four miles out of paradise (as a Catholic he made great use of the Calendar), to aid

him. He cursed him in Russian, in Prussian, and, I verily believe, in Chinese. He cursed him impartially, in the name of the Mohammedan and Buddhist religions, and concluding with a genuine native Irish imprecation, he turned round to me, and said, "Now, Mr. Umbra, if I had not the temper of an angel I should have kicked that fellow down stairs."

* * * * * *

TELEGRAMS.

1. *From* EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS, *Edinburgh, to* UMBRA, *Chatterville.*

We are printing your note book.

2. *From* UMBRA, *Chatterville, to* EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS, *Edinburgh.*

Pray don't; it would fall on Chatterville like a bombshell.

3. *From* EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS, *Edinburgh, to* UMBRA, *Chatterville.*

Too late; it is printed.

4. *From* UMBRA, *Chatterville, to* EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS, *Edinburgh.*

I am off.

EDINBURGH : T. CONSTABLE,
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